KSGU Volume 7

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in Volume 7

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン

7 黒いユニコーン

福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン 安彦良和
メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ
原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季

Kadokawa Comics A

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン 7

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虜囚となったバナージを乗せた戦艦《ラー・カイラム》が寄港したトリントン基地に
積年の妄執を決死の志へと変えたジオン残党軍が襲いかかる。
混乱の中、フライト艦長の言葉を胸に再び《ユニコーン》に乗り込んだバナージは、
目の前で再び連れ去られたミネバを奪還するため、ついに大空へと飛翔する!
黒き《ユニコーン》との対決が待つ高高度の戦場で、バナージがつかんだものとは――!?
ガンダムサーガ最新作。激情天駆ける第7巻!

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福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン 安彦良和　メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ　原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季　挿絵 虎哉孝征

Previous to GUNDAM UC

前巻までのあらすじ

宇宙世紀0096年。連邦政府を転覆しかねない『ラプラスの箱』と呼ばれる謎をめぐり、ビスト財団と連邦政府、そしてネオ・ジオン軍残党は水面下で闘争を続けていた。工業コロニーに住む少年バナージ・リンクスは、謎の少女オードリーことミネバ・ラオ・ザビを助けたことからこの争乱に巻き込まれ、『箱』への道標となる純白のMS《ユニコーンガンダム》を託されることとなる。ニュータイプと戦闘する度に『箱』へとつながる座標を開示する《ユニコーン》。その啓示に導かれ、各地を転戦することとなるバナージは、ネオ・ジオンの偽装貨物船《ガランシェール》にその命を助けられ、一時は行動を共にしていた。しかしダカール制圧作戦において、ネオ・ジオ

ンと組んだイスラム系反政府勢力の虐殺行為を目の前にし、その理不尽を止めるためにバナージは《ガランシェール》を飛び出してゆく。ミネバの身柄を預けた相手リディ・マーセナスの助力もあって、なんとかダカールを蹂躙する巨大MAの撃破に成功するバナージ。しかしその直後、突如現れた《ユニコーン》の2号機である《バンシィ》によって倒され、《ユニコーン》ごと連邦軍の戦艦《ラー・カイラム》に収容されてしまうのだった。

ビスト財団を掌握したマーサ・カーバイン、バナージの異母兄であるアルベルト、囚われのミネバ、悩める艦長ブライト・ノア、そして再調整によって人形へと変わり果てた強化人間マリーダ。さまざまな思惑が交錯する《ラー・カイラム》内で、虜囚となったバナージには《ユニコーン》が示した次の座標に関する尋問が続けられていた。

イラスト／安彦良和、虎哉孝征

Chapter 1

Part 1

The air was filled with the peculiar odor of paint and overheated wires, a stench unique to a military battleship where one would have no choice but to accept that he was in a sealed space. The liftgrip lined along the wall became a long and useless installation under gravity, and what was extended in front of Alberto's eyes was a passage that was without any characteristic except for practical use. Alberto Vist was running down the passage, ignoring the bouncing of his loose flesh whenever his soles hit the floor and his struggling knees as he dashed down the long passage. He pushed aside the battleship crew on the passage, arrived at the T-junction where the wall stood in front of him, and saw the air lock of the mobile suit deck he was looking for.

He, who was so anxious that he was seemingly about to knock into the door panel, did not check the values of the pressure gauge as he pressed the opening switch. The wind that blew outside was proof that the air outside had moved into the mobile suit deck. At this point, the "Ra Cailum" was moving in a relatively low height, but the air pressure at 500m height was still a lot lower than the air pressure maintaining the inside of the ship. Alberto arrived at a corner of the mobile suit deck that could be called a large hollow cave, followed the narrow channel along the wall, poked his body out from the handrail and looked at the bow of the ship. The shutter linked to the catapult deck was completely opened merely

moments ago, and the blunt heavy sounds caused by the metals stepping on the floor rang throughout as he saw an abnormally shaped uniformly black machine pass through the shutter.

The streamlined cold-looking machine had a mask that completely covered the profile of its face. The mechanics solders saw majestic sight of the golden shining horn at the top of the " Banshee", and stopped whatever they were doing as they gave it a look of shock. The white machine of the "Unicorn" could be seen beside the "Banshee", but this machine that had a horn too was slumped weakly and could only stand straight with the support of the "Banshee". The left arm equipped with the shield was slumped limply while the muzzle of the beam Gatling was almost sticking to the ground.

As seen through the monitor on the bridge, the pitch black shiny armor of the "Banshee" showed no signs of any scars as compared to the "Unicorn" that had lost all life within. Alberto basked his face in the air filled with the stench of oil, stared at the white machine that was thoroughly stained in dust, and charged towards the mobile suit hangar located at the wall. He could see Bentner and his assistants, dressed in white clothes, on the gondola beside the hangar set aside temporarily for the "Banshee"s use as they worked on the observation equipment they brought into the ship.

The "Banshee" ignored the humans looking at it as it bent down like a human and let the "Unicorn" resting on its shoulders slump onto the deck. "How's the situation?" Alberto panted as he got onto the gondola from the gap and asked Bentner, whose bald head turned around as he arched his back, saying,

"I should say that it's more ideal than what we expected here. The adaptability the specimen showed with regards to the " Banshee" is rather flawless, and there're no problems with the link with the NT-D."

Albeto looked at the Newtype Research Facility Head who was sneering away and felt a sense of unease rather than relief. The backdoor left beforehand meant that the brainwashing was incomplete, and someone sent her in discreetly. "This is a case of being easier than it is. Perhaps Madam Martha's values managed to provide an influence here." While Bentner continued on, Alberto reached his hand for the elevator button of the gondola, and descended 10m while Bentner and his assistants hurriedly grabbed the handrail. Once the gondola stopped, he hopped onto the deck.

The "Banshee"s massive frame was headed towards the hangar as it moved its feet that were as large as an automobile. Alberto glanced aside at the abdomen that was approximately level with the 4th storey, and at that instant, recalled the face of the " specimen" inside the cockpit, and ran towards the "Unicorn" lying slumped on the deck. The mobile suit squad that was deployed to Dakar had already returned, and the deck hangar was already half-filled with landing crafts. Alberto told himself secretly to finish his own job before the ship crew and pilots calmed down. He darted around the feet of the "Jestas" that were giving off smoke caught from the fires, and crossed the deck together with his subordinates who were starting to gather around him. "WHAT 'S GOING ON!?" However, an angry roar stopped him in his tracks.

"I just got blindsided by that black "Unicorn"! Call out the pilot! Who's the one in charge here!?"

The pilot was stopped by the subordinates in black suits, but he still turned his furious stare at Alberto, who had an impression on his face. He spotted the machine, the "Delta Plus" that was lying on its back as it was being taken in after the assault of the " Banshee", and faked a genuine smile as he answered, "My my, isn' t that Ensign Riddhe?"

"I heard that you died in battle on the "Nahel Argama". It's really great to see you safe and sound."

The pilot widened his eyes and gave a startled look back at Alberto. "You' Anaheim's…" Riddhe Marcenas said, "I'm Alberto Vist of the Vist Foundation." only to be interrupted by Alberto, who looked over the shoulder of his subordinate and stared right at the blond hair that looked agitated from the battlefield.

"I have to apologize to you for the inappropriate handling of the situation. The Foundation ordered the pilot of the "Banshee" to secure the "Unicorn" as a top priority mission."

"The "Banshee"…you're referring to that black "Unicorn"?"

"Exactly. Currently, it's the RX-0 with the highest completion rate, and doesn't have the excessive item of the Laplace Program. One can say it's a mobile suit that's purely designed to tackle Newtypes." Riddhe gasped and pulled his lower jaw up, showing the guilt of a similar secret they shared. He, as the real son of Ronan Marcenas, was a hawk sent from the Settlement Issues

Council, and Alberto understood this as well. *Don't let him get close*—Alberto commanded with this expression and ignored the stare clinging onto him as he tried to turn away. "Oi, hold it! What authority do you people have…!" An angry voice followed, but Alberto shook him off by saying "Captain Bright understands." And quickly approached the "Unicorn".

There were burn marks all over the white machine as it was dyed a layer of black stain. A steamy hot wind blew at Alberto's face as the latter arrived at its feet. The mechanics equipping with firefighting equipment were on standby around the machine in case a fire broke up. "Nobody's to get close to it! That's our Foundation's property!" Alberto growled and put on the gloves his subordinates handed him as his moved through the crowd. As his subordinates scattered to prevent any of the ship crew from approaching, Alberto did not find as he brought his hand to touch the still-scalding "Unicorn".

He climbed up the ladder his subordinate prepared and used the front armor at the waist as a footing and climbed to the cockpit hatch at the abdomen. The key of the "Laplace Box" Cardeas created, this pure white machine that bore the fate of the world—was finally in front of his sights. Alberto originally intended to use the "Ra Cailum" as the base for the search, but he never thought that he would be able to get his hands on the " Unicorn" right after he met the ship. He would not allow anyone else to interfere, and intended to immediately cut up the abdomen to extract the secrets of the "Box". He used his gloved hand to touch his face that immediately felt feverish, stood beside the cockpit cover, and whispered to his subordinate that followed up, "Do it." The subordinate nodded, opened the access hatch, and

pulled the emergency lever. The sound of hot air being exhausted could be hoard, the cover that covered the torso to the abdomen was opened, and the rectangular cockpit hatch appeared in front of Alberto's eyes.

The cockpit was still bright as it was function. Alberto waited for his subordinates to draw their automatic pistols, checked the situation inside the cockpit, nodded, and stepped into that cramped ball-shaped space. On the linear seat surrounded by the all-view monitor, one could see a pilot in his suit, lying limp on it.

Banagher Links—he muttered the name he could not shake off in his heart ever since he arrived onto Earth, and peered at the groggy face through the helmet. *The swollen face looked like it was punched before; is it because he was exposed to the tremendous G-force?* Alberto shook off this suspicion that suddenly appeared in his mind and looked around at the all-view monitor which displayed the scenery on the deck. There was nothing abnormal to note of, other than a few windows that were not functional. Alberto did not know the circumstances which led to the "Unicorn" taking part in the battle of Dakar, but since the NT-D was activated, there was a very high probability that new information was revealed. He brought his hand to the linear seat, stared at the monitors that were full of static noise, and then turned to look at the display board on the seat.

Alberto saw that on the 3 display boards, the middle one was showing the "La+" logo, and his heart immediately jumped. This was the thing, the Laplace Program that lit the way to the "Box". Since the system was on standby, he would be able to retrieve the data just by operating on it. *Is it an intermediate point here? Or is it*

going to reveal the location of the "Box" directly? he looked behind, checked that no one was peeping into the cockpit, and reached his trembling hand for the touch panel. at that moment, the sound of the power being shut off rang, and he was surrounded by darkness.

The all-view monitor images disappeared, showing the ball-shaped monitor panels. The "LA+" signal disappeared like an illusion. Alberto desperately activated the switches of the standby power, but no matter how he tried, there was no electricity, and the touch panel's signal did not revert to its original state. *Was the generator cables burnt off?* He wiped his forehead that was sweating like rain, and as he reached his hand for the monitor beside the linear seat, he saw a white object flash by his sights.

"It's useless there."

From below the helmet visor, the whites of Banagher's eyes appeared in the darkness, and his swollen face was distorted with a smile. The monitor did not shut off naturally, it was switched off—Alberto felt a chill in his mind as he understood this, and stared at the boy lying limp on the linear seat. The latter's firm stare overlapped with Cardeas' eyes, and Alberto felt the sweat on his body cool down.

Part 2

It had been more than a day, but the sky of Dakar broadcasted through the television was still a light brown. Perhaps it was new

dust raised during the removal of rubble and relief aid, or perhaps it was the deaths of 40,000 who were killed without reason lingering at this place.

The wreckage of the mobile armor was surrounded by several construction machines, showing its body amidst the hastily assembled scaffolding. There were so many wounded that they were lined on the corridors, and the dire situation of the city hospitals was such that one would mistake them for guerilla hospitals. The wasteland of rubble that extended beyond the horizon, the dead and wounded that overlay on them, and the marquee messages for the missing were all roaming under a color of tea brown. Ronan Marcenas stared at the number of casualties that continued to increase in thousands, and felt a familial sense of guilt in his heart— *are these the victims of the Box?* As he felt this surge of emotions, he looked away from the television in his office. He turned his chair to the window where the sunset was shining in , and brought his ear to the phone receiver tucked between his shoulder and cheek again as he remarked wryly, "Everyone's being extremely busy now. It will hurt to have suspected without proof here."

"This incident is really completely unexpected to us. As you know, Dakar has a lot of capital invested in it. I'm just telling you over the phone that I too used the name of my company to buy Dakar company shares. What benefit does it have to me to turn the shares I have into scrap paper?"

(It can stimulate the Federation army realignment plan—I wonder how you feel if you explain it this way?)

A woman's voice let out this immediate answer through the hotline phone directed via satellite. (This incident most definitely shows that there are threats still present on Earth. Including the space forces, this can prompt the armed forces on Earth to strengthen themselves and sweep all Zeon forces before the Republic dissembles…it will definitely bring about great economic benefit. The loss of the stocks in Dakar can be replaced easily like that, right?)

Martha Vist Carbine—the Empress of the Moon was a woman not to be underestimated. This determined and influential person was just as the economic and political world described, and at this point, she was snickering on the other end on the phone. She had just gotten onto the "Ra Cailum" which rushed off to Dakar, and she was already on the Captain's hotline phone as she made this call to Ronan's office, giving this deliberate taunting words. Ronan had already known that Martha came to Earth, but he had to admit that she, who dealt with the situation in Dakar faster than anyone else, who even sent in the 2nd RX-0 to the scene as a souvenir, was abnormally active in this. Ronan pulled in the "Ra Cailum" to search for the "Box" in order to prevent the Vist Foundation from interfering, but looking at the current situation, he was being apprehended.

Since Martha could interfere with the backing of the Senate Council Vice Chairman, it was likely that she had at least acquired the approval of the Senate Council chairman, or even a high ranking official approval—this possibility did exist. *To these high ranking officials who would react according to the winds and cared only on their short-term benefits and self-preservation, how much impact will the incident in Dakar bring to them? How much restrain will they*

abandon? Ronan felt through the phone call that Martha had everything clear in mind, "In that case, you'll be the ones benefitting from this, right?" and answered back, smearing mud on the other party's face.

"Anaheim Electronics President's wife…no, I should be calling you the substitute leader of the Vist Foundation now, right?"

(Just call me Martha.)

"Then, Martha, even if our main plea is to increase the military supplies, we will definitely not use the capital as a sacrifice. Unlike Lhasa three years ago, we have many casualties on the government's side too. First, the party that triggered this incident wasn't Neo Zeon, but Islamic radicals who preached about breaking away from the orthodox teachings."

At this moment, the television just so happened to show the Garvey Enterprise building, and Ronan turned his sights to glance at that image. There were police cars parked right in front of the building, and the investigators carrying cardboard boxes were gathered in hordes like ants at the main entrance. The investigations included the dealings with other companies, and the initial stage of the various procedures with regards to the freezing of the Garvey Enterprises assets were most likely completed. The solar generators Garvey Enterprise had were absorbed under the Government's control, and the operating profits would be used to rebuild Dakar and compensate the bereaved relatives of the victims. This process was most likely planned to the details by assistance teams created by related independent organizations. Fortunately, or not, the Senate Council and the surrounding

official areas managed to avoid this calamity, and the Senators were slowly gathered at this capital that was off its alert phase, summoned for an emergency parliamentary meeting.

The objective of the man named Mahdi Garvey was still unconfirmed, but this one terrorist attack was not enough to cause the gears of money and power to stop. The bribery of the supervising institutes to build that mobile armor, the political contributions, and the expenses required to rebuild the capital; these was the bloodstream of the capitalist society, locked within a sealed loop. *Did this man descend upon madness because of the "Box" too?* He looked at Mahdi's VTR that was being replayed again, and uttered these words in his heart before looking back outside the window again. (These radicals you say have a Neo Zeon insignia on their mobile armor. Also, there were eyewitness reports of the " Sleeves" mobile suits, right?) Martha argued back and used her voice to choke Ronan's neck.

"There are always implications behind lawbreakers, regardless of principles or propositions. Anyway, the shock from this incident is second only to the previous "Char's Counterattack". The security on all the government facilities have to be increased, and all ships moving to and from Earth will be checked on without exception. Of course, including the remnants of Neo Zeon, we will carry out the thorough eradication of the terrorists. Considering he economic losses from the delay in shipments and the added adjusted budgets on both the military and public safety sides, I wonder how much more money we will have to spend here—"

(Chairman Ronan, what you said is ostensibly right, but we civilians have it tougher in terms of money. Let's stop groveling in

the dirt on each other and talk about something that will benefit both parties.)

"I hope so too, but I am someone who has to get to somewhere immediately too."

(Then I'll cut the chase. I heard that a certain highly esteemed visitor is currently residing in your residence, Chairman. I hope you can hand that person over to our care.)

Ronan's heart that would not be shaken by practically anything suddenly skipped a beat, and his hand that was holding onto the receiver trembled. He had already prepared himself when he asked the military for a full time surveillance watch that 'her' staying in his house would soon be revealed, but he never expected the other party to stab him first. "I don't understand what you're trying to say…" Ronan immediately answered, but Martha again took the initiative as she cut him off, (You're the one who said that you don't want to waste time.) and spoke with a cold tone.

(This is for that person's safety too. The terrorists chose to attack the capital during the parliament break, and most likely, the media will think that the government's trying to creating an act. The opposition that think that the money should be allocated to welfare instead of the army realignment plan will stand on the same frontline as the media, and the final responsibility will be pointed at the Settlement Issues Council that has been pushing for the realignment. At this point, if people find out that the princess of Zeon is hidden in the house of the Council chairman…)

The leaders of the military body moved only for body, secretly colluded with Neo Zeon, and planned a terrorist attack using Islamic militants as a cover-up to help increase the budget of the Federation army's realignment plan—this script that could not be overturned easily immediately flashed through in Ronan's mind, and his held himself from clicking his tongue and closed his eyes. " This is really an impeccable rhetoric you have there. One might even suspect that you're the mastermind here!" Ronan retorted sarcastically, and Martha could not hold back her snicker (The majority of the society only believes in what they hope to believe) as she spoke with a cold tone.

(Everything is a conspiracy set by the Settlement Issues Council. I suppose this story should be an exciting fantasy the foolish public will like, right?)

"Will the secretive Foundation hiding the mysterious "Box" appear in that fantasy?"

(Let's see. If the media is willing to let go of all advertisements related to the Foundation, with Anaheim Electronics first, they'll definitely be able to write a more interesting fantasy.)

Did she expect everything here? Ronan realized that this opponent was not going to be easy as he gave a sigh of realization, " Speaking of the Foundation, I did hear of a rumor." and raised a topic to revive the situation.

"The Senate is currently discussing about reevaluating the laws of societies and foundations. If this bill is passed, the audits for public welfare will be stricter, and the non-profit organizations

that exist only in name will be taxed like legal entities. In other words, the idea of taking advantage of a non-taxable privilege to hoard funds for the Foundation won't work. Amongst it, the Foundation may most likely have to disband."

(What has this got to do with the secret organization hiding the "Box"?)

"Of course it has nothing to do with it, but the premise before that is that you must certainly have the "Box" first."

The breath from the other end of the phone vanished, and for the first time, Martha answered back in silence. Ronan was not bluffing; he had prepared countless legal ways to force the Vist Foundation into a corner for this moment. He held his breath and waited for the other party's response, but after several seconds, (I won't let you lead me here.) Martha merely answered coldly.

(Please hand "her" to the Foundation. This will benefit both sides.)

"Leaving aside my side, what benefit will you get?"

(You can think about that. We've acquired the mobile suit that's basically the key to the "Box". Don't forget that the benefits and ills of preventing the "Box" from being revealed works for both of us.)

Ronan lost the battle completely in this one. The RX-0 which contained the signals locating the "Box", the authority over the " Ra Cailum" and all the bargaining chips on the table were in

Martha's hand. It was difficult to deal with the aftermath of the Dakar situation with the power of the Federation government alone. if he did not rely on the power of the Vist Foundation, he would end up causing the government to dissolve. (Please make a decision as quickly as possible.) Martha then spoke in a rhetoric, not even a question, and Ronan let out a heavy sigh.

(Just send her to the "Ra Cailum". You do know the location of the ship now? It's where your prince is working hard at now.)

"Yeah, this world is so small. I should ask you not to do anything to my son, shouldn't I?"

(Why would I? I don't want to be enemies against you.)

Martha finished this conversation with a thoroughly sarcastic reply and cut the line. Ronan put down the receiver and looked at the sunset that was redder than before, leaned on the back of the leather chair, and sighed.

The neighing of a horse came from the courtyard, and the window trembled slightly. *That's Pilgrim, right? Riddhe had been riding it around for a while, and once he left, it naturally can't shake off its excessive vigor;* This was what Dwiyon revealed to Ronan. He looked at the photo hanging on the wall, a photo with Ronan and a 5-year-old beaming Riddhe, and turned to look at the television without sound. A VTR of the disaster that was probably taken by a victim showed a collapsing skyscraper, the dust that loomed, and the people who were unable to evacuate in time. That scene was just like Hell on Earth.

Did Riddhe witness this battlefield too? He, bounded by the destiny of the Marcenas family, and treated his affections for the princess of Zeon as the only solace, did he witness this hell too? Ronan was emotionally-struck by a sense of depression and switched off the television.

After this, Riddhe will experience all sorts of despair again. He will think that his father betrayed him, will harbor hatred where he can't release it, and will wait for things to develop, but this can't be helped. I can only do this to let him and the world he lives for continue to exist. I can only do this to prevent the 100-year-old curse from toppling the world—Ronan closed his eyes silently, let out a sigh, opened his eyes again, and picked up the receiver of the internal phone.

"Bring Miss Mineva Zabi over."

Part 3

Night instantly arrived as the sunset hid itself behind the forest ridge. The road with hardly any vehicles passing by on it, let alone pedestrians, was dyed a darkness of night, and a wind that came from seemingly nowhere caused the entire field of black malt to rustle. Looking over, there were no street lights or anything, and there were no signs of any city lights. The only items that seemed to be holdovers from the old age, the telephone poles were extended across the horizon on both paths, leading far away.

It had been more than 3 hours since she followed her plan and escaped from the Marcenas' residence. She should have reached the city earlier, according to her predictions, but at this point, it did not look like she was approaching the city anytime soon. She only walked for 7km, but she never expected it to take so much time and energy. The only things that could be used as landmarks were the windmills acting as wind-powered electricity. Mineva Lao Zabi looked far beyond the windmills, and opened up the map she brought from the residence, but found that the surroundings was so dark the words could not be seen, and bit her lips. The map rustled with the wind, and she looked around to inspect her surroundings. There was a worn-out restaurant sign beside the road in front of her that was about to descend into darkness.

It was a cottage-sized diner, a shop that could occasionally be seen in a colony. There was only one car parked at the parking lots in front of the shop, and business did not seem bustling. Mineva peeked through the slightly dirty window to look into the shop, checked that it was seemingly not a gathering of ill-intentioned motorists, and pushed the double hinged doors aside.

She could see only a counter and 6 box seats there, and after looking around, she could not spot a customer or even a shop attendant. "Is it possible to have a meal here?" she asked meekly, and a chair opposite the counter could be heard moving. An old man who was ostensibly the shop owner suddenly poked his head out, and his obviously surprised stare met Mineva's in the eyes.

The shopkeeper quickly whipped up some greasy fries, a hamburger and a salad with only tomato and lettuce, and again sat

on the simple chair opposite the counter. The television set in a corner of the counter was showing the news of the Dakar incident. The incident involved the remnants of Neo Zeon, the Federation army had increased their security, and the thousands of missing—or dead, trapped under the rubble; as she digested on the news broadcaster's words, Mineva silently ate her food. Even after deducting the expenses of the long-distance bus trip from the city, she still had enough money. This money was borrowed from Zinnerman's bag after she left a message for the latter. She recalled how she hid from the others to search another person's bag, and thinking about this act she once did pained her as her hairs stood; however, she had already experienced in "Industrial 7" the reality that she could not do anything without money. She considered that since she could only use this little money left, she should not waste even a single coin, and she felt hesitant over the excessiveness of coffee after the meal.

In fact, even if she scrimped on her money, she would not be able to assure her future situation. She had a faint hope that once she reached the city, she would be able to meet with the anti-government forces and contact Neo Zeon, but she understood that the aftermath of the Dakar incident made her expectations harder to fulfill. In the worst situation, she may be captured by the Federation public security, but it was better than to be tamed by the Marcenas family. She wholeheartedly thought about avoiding being used as a diplomatic bargaining chip or a mean to settle the aftermath of the Dakar incident, and planned this escape while seemingly losing her mind, but had practically no plan on what to

do after leaving the residence. Basically, even if she were to meet with someone who could provide her aid, she did not feel that the current Neo Zeon had room for her.

Full Frontal actually let a man like Mahdi Garvey cause rampage on Earth, and most probably, had a hand in this incident. He hasn't obtained the "Box", so why is it that he decided to add fuel to the fire—? She recalled the face with the icy cold mask in her mind, and could not help but clasp her hands. At this moment, a cup filled with coffee was served before her eyes, and after she lifted her head in doubt, she saw the shopkeeper, "Drink up. It's my treat." Who said this.

He did not put up a false smile, and his straightforward attitude wore off Mineva's urge to refuse this hospitality. "Thank you. I'll help myself then." Mineva answered and took a sip of coffee. it was probably expected to her, but it was a nice aromatic cup of coffee.

"I haven't seen you around here before. Where are you from?"

The shopkeeper asked as he cleared up the plate containing the hamburger. Mineva hesitated for a while before pointing her finger upward, and the owner followed her finger as he looked up, replying, "You're a Spacenoid? No wonder I never met you before. " He showed a smile, and Mineva showed an honest smile.

"I've been living on this rural land for so long that I almost forgot that there are people living in space. Are you someone who' s here to sightsee? There's nothing much to see around here."

"No…to someone living in space, it's a delightful thing to be able to step onto the ground."

"You're referring to Earth's gravity? To people like us, the gravity does inconvenience us in some way. If we can reach space, my feet and waist will more or less feel lighter."

The owner cleared the utensils clearly and wiped his hands on his aged apron. He still looked healthy and strong, but his hands showed the many years of toil and labor. Mineva spotted a young-looking youth who seemed to be the son of the shop owner, dressed in Federation uniform, on an old photo hanging on the wall, "Have you always been living on Earth, owner?" and tried to ask.

"Yeah, I never left America once ever since I was born. I did go to the orbital path once for a field trip in school when I was young. My wife's now dead, and I did think of going to space myself…but the money I saved up isn't enough to pay for the expenses needed to migrate to space."

"I heard that the Space Migration is still under way, is it not?"

"That thing is like a ship ferrying slaves in the past, set up to ship the illegal residents into space. Unbelievably, it seemed that they knew who didn't want to go to space too. Someone like me will never be nominated to be moved to space."

The shop owner laughed with a self-decrying flair as he poured coffee for himself and took a sip. There was no real evidence

around, but Mineva could imagine that the son in the photo who set off probably never returned.

"I do feel reluctance about leaving a land I stayed on for many years, but in our era, we heard many tales of the devastation at the end of the old century from our forefathers when we were growing up. There were famines, natural disasters, wars…as bad as it can get. Humanity created the Federation government to escape from that hell, and started to move people to space. Some people said that they were just dumping the poor into space, but many said that they went to space on their own will. They all decided that they would not return to Earth before Earth's natural environment recovered."

She had already forgotten about this way of looking at things. The owner did not look at Mineva's speechless face any further as he turned his sights at the special television program broadcasting the news.

"That Dakar's just a land people feel will be devoured by the desert within a hundred years. Someone suggested about moving the capital over there after the war, probably to let the officials understand how bad Earth has deteriorated. The natural environment had finally started to recover, but the One Year War caused things to revert to how it was. Some felt that humanity should just move to space entirely and let Earth rest…"

"Are there any people who think this way amongst the Federation government?"

"Yeah, I suppose there was a young and gifted idealist who thought of it this way too…but even after looking at the reality in Dakar, humanity hasn't changed. The only thing that can be said however is that the desertification is so fast it's completely beyond expectations, and then they moved the capital to that place called Lhasa in Tibet or something. After it was destroyed by the Neo Zeon terrorist attack, those guys returned back to Dakar to rebuild. In the end, Dakar still ended up as a terrorist target. There doesn't seem to be a limit to the worrying here."

"Even if ideals are correct, people's feelings won't follow…we're really hopeless."

"Those are some deep words you're saying, Missy. You seem pretty knowledgeable."

The owner gave a probing expression in his smile. Mineva then realized that she spoke too much and lowered her head.

"But it's not good for a young person like you to view things this way. I guess it's best that you remember that all things start from humanity's good intentions."

"Humanity's, good intentions…?"

"The reason why we built the Federation government, why we carried out the space migration plan, all of this was born from the good intention to save humanity and Earth. Those who wanted to stay on Earth and leave the land they were accustomed to their children did it out of their good intentions too. If the notion of

wanting the company to earn money, or that of fulfilling the responsibilities we've been given are good intentions, then the intention to distinguish ourselves and change our families' lives are of course good intentions…"

"But that should be called selfishness. It's that kind of selfishness that ignores everyone else that the Earth—"

"Maybe, but if we deny that good intention, this world is basically darkness."

The owner wet his lips with the coffee and said calmly. Mineva blinked her eyes, ostensibly caught by the flaw in her thinking.

"Some people suppressed their emotions just to work. That God in the East who abandoned his wife and son and left his house… Buddha, was it? I really can't like that guy. I hate that Char who sent an asteroid falling down on us. He said that it was for the sake of Earth, for the sake of humanity, but what he did really caused me to wonder if he actually liked humanity before."

These words rang in Mineva's ears, seemingly tying down the her now. She could not entrust herself to those warm hands, she could not face the embrace that shrouded her, and she, who could not decide on her foundation, was just running away— "Then, what do you think I should do?" She realized the agitation she let out in her question as she looked at the owner face to face.

"Your question can be answered by those sly answers only adults can do. If I know the answer to that question, I won't be here as a small diner boss in such a place here."

The warm smile only an old man could give caused Mineva to relax her pricked nerves. She took a small sigh and gave a light smile.

"I agree with it. Besides, it's a must to understand our own limitations as humans…"

"That's true, but it sure is troublesome to hear you as a young person speak like you saw through everything and gave a brief estimation for others, Missy."

At this moment, the shop owner looked at Mineva right in the eyes and spoke. The latter felt that her cringed self was slapped on the back and gasped.

Right, she was the one who thought that she had seen through everything. She grumbled about the surrounding darkness and cringed, not willing to take the initiative to do anything. She should have known that waiting was not going to work, and light was not going to shine in. "Is that so…you're right." She subconsciously muttered and clasped her hands tightly.

"I escaped outside without being restricted, but I thought that I saw through everything, and couldn't progress on…maybe I'm really just running away…"

The owner frowned with a puzzled look. *What I want to do, and what I have to do—these aren't what I should worry, but rather what I can do now…* as Mineva repeated these thoughts in her mind, she

silently muttered to herself, telling herself not to run away anymore. At this moment, the coffee cup suddenly rattled, and Mineva looked up at the ceiling.

The deep buzzing sound became more obvious from above, and she could hear that it was the rotors of a helicopter spinning, causing the vibrations to spread within the shop. As the glass windows and other cutlery started to rattle, the owner did not look away from the ceiling as he muttered, "Has the military decided to patrol around here too?". *There's nothing to be afraid of.* The moment she made this decision, the other party came to invite her. She gulped down the cold coffee, "Owner", called out and got up from her seat. She placed the dining expenses on the counter and stared right at the owner who stared back at her in utter shock.

"The coffee was tasty. I suppose this trip to Earth was worth this cup of coffee alone."

The spotlights that shone down from the sky dyed the windows inside the shop. The sounds of the vehicles being parked rang continuously, and the sounds of the vehicle doors being opened and closed followed. "You…" the owner spoke as he retreated, and Mineva turned her back to him and faced the diner's doors. Soon after, the double hinged doors were pushed aside, and several men rushed in with killing intent.

These men were dressed in suits, but Mineva could tell that they had pistols in their suits. It was easy of them to capture her back—no, there had to be something for them to invite her back

after letting her escape this far. Once she realized this predicament, she met a man in his forties right in the eyes. The man's expression did not waver, "Miss Audrey Burne" as he feigned politeness.

"Chairman Ronan is waiting for you. Please follow us back."

He approached Mineva without revealing any openings, and put his hand on her shoulder. At that moment, the emotions that was vented within Mineva immediately exploded, "How rude." and a sharp voice came from her mouth,

"I'm Mineva Zabi. I have no intention to run away from hide. Make way."

The taller man was ostensibly jolted by electricity as he shook his hand off, took a step back, and nearly tumbled. Mineva bowed to the wide-eyed owner behind the counter, walked towards the door, took a breath, and entered the gathered spotlight.

This is good. My time as Audrey Burne has ended. As the heir to the Zabi family, there are many things I have to face. This realization was gradually settled within Mineva's heart as she let the downwash from the helicopter blow upon her.

Part 4

"…I have no intention of undermining Londo Bell's independence. However, though you are an external organization, the fact still remains that you belong to the Federation's space fleet, right? You have to listen to the order of the Senate chairman."

Martha spoke as if she was a customer complaining about faulty goods. Her face, which was abnormally bewitching for her age, brought an overly intense flavor to the otherwise bland Captain's room of the "Ra Cailum". Bright Noa glanced aside to look at his impatient-looking First Officer Meran, "I have no objections to this order." and showed a steeled face as he answered.

"The only thing about my personal doubt is regarding why is it that you, a civilian, had to be the one telling me this."

"Did the Senate Council affirm this with you?"

"Yes. I've received notifications to assist the Vist Foundation's request as much as possible."

"Then, you have to follow orders. Londo Bell's a flower without fruit amidst the tired forces in the chaos after the war. Your responsibility should be over once the space army's reassembled. It should be your responsibility as the commander, Captain Bright, to assign new positions for your subordinates."

"Oh."

"If you're willing to give assistance, I'll naturally pay you back. Currently, I'll use this battleship as a test ship for the UC plan, since the backup machines "Jestas" are gathered here as well….as for what kind of future this will bring upon Londo Bell, I suppose you'll understand."

Martha continued to sit comfortably on the reception sofa as she raised her foot triumphantly again. "Do you understand?" Bright

showed no emotion on his face as he tossed this question to Meran, who answered, “I don’t.” Once he heard his First Officer’s confident reply, Bright felt a sense of satisfaction as he looked at Martha, whose hands on the armrests tensed up as she showed some hastiness in her eyes.

“…You’re really an old fox. I heard from others that you’re a blockhead who doesn’t understand about the affairs of the world. I suppose those useless subordinates of mine were completely fooled.”

Bright had no intention of denying or admitting this. Martha stared at this tight-lipped man for several seconds before sighing, and said, “Anyway, please listen to our side’s instructions.” before turning away immediately.

“Let me tell you this beforehand, it’s useless to hope for Chairman Ronan’s authority. Things were settled without you knowing, Captain.”

I don’t have to answer you regarding what you don’t know. She conveyed this message silently, frowned, gave a chilling glance, and turned her body, dressed in a violet suit around as she left the Captain’s room. Bright immediately relaxed the strength in his shoulders, and Meran realized the sigh he kept within for a long time.

“Good grief…that devil’s just like how she’s described.”

"But she's anxious. That "Gundam" pilot has been keeping quiet whenever he was asked about information regarding the " Box"."

Banagher Links, was it? Bright recalled the face of the boy who was ostensibly the "Gundam" pilot, and released his uniform collar. "What do we do?" Meran asked a meaningful question.

"It seems that her words about Chairman Ronan being controlled aren't just a bluff. If the news about the Dakar incident and the "Box" are revealed, the Senate Council that had been assisting the Vist Foundation all this time won't be able to stand up. The financial world is better than the political world in terms of manipulating the media."

"If things may end up causing a scandal that involves the entire army, the aides supporting the Senate Council can only shut up… is this what you mean?"

"Yes. The Dakar Incident gave the Foundation an unexpected excuse. It doesn't seem like that mobile suit, the "Banshee" was calibrated, but they brought it along too."

He got up from the sofa and switched the monitor panel behind the office table to the external surveillance. At this point, the "Ra Cailum" was docked 20km away offshore from Dakar, and one could still see the trails of dust remaining on the horizon. After two days of confirmation, the number of definite casualties had risen to more than 40,000, and this number continued to increase bit by bit even at this point. The shadows flying about the city

were most probably the firefighters and the media. it was said that the relief squads had already deployed helicopters equipped with heat sensors from all over the world, just to find survivors buried under the rubble.

The same situation goes for the inside of the ship, as there was no time to rest. After confirming the casualties, sending in relief aid and doing all sorts of assistance, everyone realized that two days of work had just passed by. However, these seemed to have nothing to do with Martha. It was fine if it was just letting a mobile suit dock with the active squad, but she insisted that the ship was to follow her orders, and Bright gave an absolutely correct answer, saying that "The law never specified that we can move a government's properly for private purposes". She came to the Captain's room to voice her misgivings, leading to the commotion from before. Since Ronan was exercising his authority as the vice-chairman of the Senate, Martha overruled this by using her authority as the Senate chairman, and he ended up being involved in this childish fight over power he inadvertently got involved in. At the rate this situation continued, perhaps one side would probably use the name of the prime minister?

"The Foundation and the Settlement Issues Council is having a tug-of-war with the Senate Council as the stage…what is that " Laplace Box", for them to go to this extent?"

All the abnormalities started from that point. "I don't know." Bright rubbed his eyes and said as he turned to Meran.

"It seemed that the "Nahel Argama" was chasing the "Box" before the job got handed to us, but…"

"We can't make contact with them? If they can testify against the ploys by the Foundation and the Senate Council, we may be able to turn the wills of those supporting the Council."

"That's a little difficult. The "Nahel Argama" is controlled directly by the Senate Council, and they're banned from contacting their original regiment. If we resist the order, the command of Londo Bell may be moved by the Senate Council. It's frustrating, but the fact remains that the space army wants Londo bell dissolved."

It was just like what Martha pointed out. Londo Bell was a flower without fruit in the organization called the military, fatigued by the internal conflicts after the war—this temporary squad that was built to prevent Neo Zeon from rising again suddenly had a very heavy outsider flair. At this point, when the space army realignment plan was ready, many aides felt endangered by the massive discretionary power Londo Bell was granted. If there was a slight misstep, they would definitely use this chance to raise a large purge. "Besides, it's not interesting to have the Foundation and the Council fight it out themselves." Bright continued and sat back on the chair. He clasped his hands and continued to let his thumbs touch as he asked himself, *What shall I do?*

"…Looks like we can only work on our own?"

The answer was already out. Well, I've been living this kind of life all this while. Bright closed his eyes, let out a soft sigh, "Meran", and lifted his determined face.

"Contact the *Luio Chamber of Commerce. Don't use the basic wireless in the ship; send a private mail to them."*

"The Luio Chamber of Commerce, as in the company based in New Hong Kong…?"

"That's considered a top-notch company on earth, but it does deal with all sorts of business behind the scenes. There's someone we can contact. Send the message to the media relations branch, and mark the recipient as "Hayato Kobayashi of the Audhumla"."

Meran frowned for a short moment, but answered, "I'll prepare the document" and stamped his heels together; however, he showed a relieved look on his face because there was a decision made. *First, we will have to obtain the correct information, or we won't be able to think of a plan to escape this ugly political battle. There's no option of bowing to authority here.* Bright, lost in his thoughts, absent-mindedly stepped into a little ditch—and once Meran left the room, he slumped into his chair and put his eyes upon a deceased's portrait.

"Don't you dare laugh!"

Commander Amuro Ray's photo did not say anything as it showed what looked like a wry smile back at him.

Part 5

There was also an interrogation room in the battleship. The room that was used to interrogate prisoners or crew that broke the military rules was suspiciously similar to a setting in a movie, but

there was a presence that indicated that this was not the case. The room that was 3m wide had a table for interrogating and a table for recording. The recording table had a terminal that was used for quick note-taking, and the interrogating table, naturally, had a moveable desk lamp. It was a piece of equipment used to shine upon the face of the suspect. But even after seeing all these things, he could not feel a sense of realism here.

As for this lack of realism, the fact that his hands were cuffed was a weird thing to him to too. He was interrogated by the Federation army and the Neo Zeon army before this, but both sides only prompted him to tell the truth, confirm the situation with him, and never gave him a vibe that they would raise their voices. This was the first time he was being interrogated for real—no, or rather, this was the first time he remained silent for so long. The handcuff chains that were shorter than he imagined rattled. *It's the sound of metal,* Banagher Links thought blankly in his mind, and lifted his face that was less swollen. The interrogator 's stoic face could be seen from the other side of the bright desk lamp.

"It's about time that you obey us now, right?"

The man's voice showed a dumbfounded flair rather than anger or anxiousness. If this hulking man's words were to be believed, he was in his forties, and used to be part of an elite squad in the past, the Titans. During the peak of the Zeon purge craze after the war, he used to torture a few suspects to death, and ended up dismissed from the military as a result. After that, this man was employed by

the Vist Foundation. Leaving aside whether his words were true or not, his thin lips were showing the cruelty of an officer, and thus, Banagher tried his best to avoid seeing the other man's face.

"Get into the cockpit of the "Unicorn" and bring out the data from the Laplace Program. It's that simple. Just follow what you're told to do, and you can get your freedom. We won't pursue you about getting involved with the military's top secret stuff or that you once assisted Neo Zeon. I feel this condition isn't bad."

The man sat on the chair with his waist tilted down and used his index finger to tap the finger. Banagher predicted what the other party would do next, and quietly gathered strength in his stomach. As he expected, the man kicked the table aside, "TALK!" and yelled, his voice echoing throughout the cramped room.

"If you think that you won't be treated too severely just because you're a kid, you're in for a grave mistake here. In an adult's society, we don't show mercy to anyone we suspect to be an enemy. No matter whether that person is a woman or a child, we will torture thoroughly until the suspect comes clean. You took a military mobile suit on your own, joined the Neo Zeon ranks, and got arrested in flagrante delicto after taking part in the Dakar terrorist incident in the end. There's no room for mercy here. If we hand you over to the military, you'll be in jail for the rest of your life."

Banagher heard the same things the previous day. If one were to link things that way, it was true that they could be explained that way. He, who had no intention of defending himself, turned his face to the man.

"The Neo Zeon cargo ship you rode on has escaped, and now you don't have any place to return to. We are the only ones who can save you here. It's too stupid to give up your life just for this kind of thing."

The man's voice suddenly became gentle, perhaps because he thought he got what he wanted. *This kind of pampering tone really annoys me, and I'm able to be stubborn till this point.* Banagher thought carelessly as he ignored the man and looked away from him. At this moment, the man slammed the table hard and yelled,

"WHO ARE YOU KEEPING THIS SECRET FOR!? YOU LITTLE __"

"That's enough."

Another voice could be heard, and the man shut up. The man sitting at the recording table got up, and his stout and fat body appeared amidst the light.

"Leave here for a moment. I want to talk with him for a while."

Alberto Vist's face was shown from bottom to top, and his body showed an unnerving shadow as he looked down at Alberto. The man clicked his tongue and glared angrily at Banagher for a while before he got up, walked by Alberto, and went pass the door of the room. The "Ra Cailum" had in practice become a personal ship for the Vist Foundation, so there was no crew member around for the questioning. The interrogation itself was not carried out by an officer, so naturally, there wouldn't be a timekeeper accompanying . Once the man left, Banagher and Alberto were the only two

people left inside. Of course, the men of the Foundation should be keeping their eyes wide as they as they look inside the monitor room through the camera through the camera on the ceiling.

Banagher had a vague feeling that the reason why he felt a bit mindful was because there was a hidden gravity linking him and Alberto. This man had the same father as him—and at this point, this was the only thing he knew of. He toyed with this relationship that seemed so surreal to him in his mouth, and looked back at Alberto's face right in front of him. Just like their meeting on the " Nahel Argama", Alberto's collar was flipped slightly out of his obviously tight collar, and turned his blue eyes at Banagher.

"You're protecting this secret for Cardeas Vist…your father?"

The back of Alberto's chair let out a creaking sound before he slowly spoke up. *Is that the case?* Banagher pondered for a while, but before he could answer, he looked away from the other man.

"You're really amazing. You have a strong will, you have guts, and even the sense of piloting the "Unicorn" is gifted to you. It seems that the Laplace Program's data can't be extracted without your neurowaves. Even if we tie you down to the cockpit, nobody else can read the data as long as you don't agree. When did you learn how to operate it like that?"

Banagher himself was not sure. When Alberto barged into the cockpit, his first immediate thought was to switch off, and did not react because he understood the system. "Seriously, you're made too perfectly." Alberto sighed as he put his elbows on the table.

"You give the look like you don't understand anything, but you 're always in the center of everything. The situation's changed according to your will; you're just like a natural king here, so perfect that it feels disgusting. What was unsealed might not be the Laplace Program, but you."

These words were unexpected and ominous. Banagher inadvertently looked up, and Alberto seized this opportunity as his fat cheeks sneered.

"Don't you find it weird? You're too perfect already. As expected of an enhanced human Cardeas created."

"Enhanced…human?"

Perhaps you're the same kind as me.—Marida's voice, which he heard some time before, suddenly awoke deep within his ears, and he felt goosebumps all over him. "Am I wrong?" Alberto said as his sneer intensified.

"When you were in the Vist family, I was in a boarding school, so I don't know how Cardeas raised you, but…you said before that you don't have any memories of that time, right?"

That was something Banagher let slip from his mouth the previous day. He again turned his silent stare at Alberto.

"Perhaps you feel that you sealed your own memories. But do you feel that an ordinary person can do this? If your talent wasn't spotted by Cardeas, and if you were trained before you were matured—"

"THAT'S NOT THE CASE!"

He yelled out to shake off the chill, and the sound overpowered the sounds of the air-conditioning and the machine, rumbling the air within the room. Banagher did not look at Alberto's face as the latter twitched his eyebrows, and instead stared at his hands that were handcuffed.

"Whenever I think about the past…about dad, mom, I'll feel sad …that's why I told myself to keep forgetting about them, forget about everything, until I really could not think of anything…that's all."

"If you're able to forget your past just like that, it's proof that you're not ordinary. You're an Cyber-Newtype created by Cardeas ."

"No! You're wrong! The relationship between parent and child isn't like that! If that's the case, aren't you a human created by Cardeas too?"

Alberto gasped and muttered, "What…" as his face looked sinister. Banagher stared right back at him in the eyes.

"The one entrusting, the one being entrusted…it's because we' re father and son that we can love or hate, right? I can't live like we don't have any relation to each other, si I…"

Banagher swallowed the latter half of his words and he looked down. *That's why I can seal my memories too, and that's why I can even recognize him as my father in such a short time, and got bounded down*

by his last words. This isn't about theory, this isn't about my own specifications. This troublesome thing called blood relations isn't something that can be cleared through knowledge alone— "So, what are you trying to say?" Alberto uttered these words and turned his impatient face to the side.

"What parent and son, what blood relations…those are just biological definitions. There are still other things humans have to protect first."

Alberto got up after saying these words, ostensibly trying to convince himself. *This isn't something he understood from his heart.* Banagher instinctively sensed this as he looked at the back of Alberto's pudgy body.

"What's the so called "Laplace Box"? It's an order. The world's rules can continue to run with the secret beliefs in this "Box". It's like a common delusion, an existence that guards people from their selfishness. Once we lose it, the Vist Foundation will not be the only thing that can't continue. The gears running the world up till now will lose control too. The Dakar incident was one proof of this. If Cardeas never intended on opening the "Box", that incident would never have happened. After the chaos of the One Year War, we learned the tactics on how to control war."

The shadow formed by the lamp caused the slightly arched back to look heinous. *That's the back of someone scared of something.* This thought flashed through Banagher's mind as he recognized this.

"After this, the organizations under the name of Zeon will be annihilated entirely, actual aliens will be the only enemies left for the Federation, and the situation won't change. There is an instinct to fight within humans; as long as society continues to rely on the differences in hierarchy, wars will never disappear from the world. Even if we don't deliberately scatter these seeds, humans can still find any excuses for war, whether they're tensions in governments or occasional battles. Gears to drive the economy, a catharsis that can purge the instinct to fight; without these two factors, humans will continue to start full-scale worlds. This is a symptom of ill-management of humanity, and it's impossible to cure them. We can only think of ways to live with our bad habits."

If there's a society where war is regulated, where we believe that terrorism and grudges can be managed, won't we end up subduing people 's hearts. Won't we end up creating more people like Mahdi Garvey? Banagher thought subconsciously, but he did not say it out. Alberto again returned to the chair facing him, and his eyes that were looking right at Banagher had a dull glint in them.

"Do you understand? We don't view war as our food. It's because of the Foundation and Anaheim controlling war that humans can avoid the fate of destroying each other after the wars, and managed to hang on. Cardeas however wanted to break this order, and you're helping him to break it. Your father's shadow buried within your heart is driving you and the "Unicorn". Think about it carefully. What's the point of protecting this secret for Cardeas' sake? Even if a kid like you leaves the "Box" alone, there

won't be any benefit. You'll just cause misfortune to everyone around you. You better treat this as a final advice from a blood relative—"

"Where is Miss Marida?"

Banagher let a voice so calm even he was surprised by, and was unable to speak. At this point, Alberto looked like he was taken aback in a critical area as he immediately looked away. Banagher however continued to stare at him and ask, "Miss Marida should be with you on Earth. Where is she now?", and the latter suddenly gave a fidgety look as he looked back, "This has nothing to do with you." sounding vague as he answered.

"Instead of talking about this, you should be understanding your own situation here—"

"I am thinking…! But is this something that I can decide with my own mind, right? I guess not, right?"

He subconsciously moved his hand and tapped the bottom of the table, creating a deep sound from below. Alberto cringed his body back slightly and turned his suspicious and fearful look back at Banagher.

"Up till now, the many people who got involved with me… including those who helped me, those who fought against me to the death, they all helped me become who I am. Even Cardeas… even dad, he's just one of them."

Banagher gritted his teeth and reached his tightly clenched fists onto the table. The chain of the handcuff let out a hard sound, and caused a slight tremor in the dim space of the interrogation room without a trace.

"Even now, I can sense that Miss Marida is somewhere nearly. She's not the only one though; Audrey, Ensign Riddhe, Captain, Miss Loni, Mr Daguza, I can feel them too…I'm frustrated about this, but even you are someone I can sense. I have to find an answer everyone can accept before I can make a decision for the " Box". That's because I…"

Have to fulfill my responsibility—"I have to do this." This line alone caused him to be bound together with others. That foreign sense spread within his heart, and he barely managed to swallow the latter half of his words as a result. *In the end, is this line something I realized in my heart?* Banagher gathered his consciousness in a corner of my temples, but he did not sense *that pulsation*. Once he affirmed that this was definitely his thought, he tried to think about that question again. *What is myself?*

An individual unit can't accomplish anything, and this unstable existence definitely can't form words. He can only relate with his parents, with others, before he can build his own self existence as he knows the world…or rather, "discover" it. If that were the case, the way I can feel everyone entering my heart isn't a hallucination here, but that my original self won't be killed off like this. What's resonating and changing is the existence called "self", and this sense that continues to expand may be the real nature behind Newtypes.

That's why dad never told me to what I should do, but told me to do what I feel I have to do before entrusting me the "Unicorn". He also entrusted the possibility of human change in me—but what if these souls I can feel can be adjusted by human means…? *As he continued to think about things in a roundabout way, Banagher shuddered with fear and clasped his trembling fists together. Alberto turned his silent stare on the other party for a while and muttered, "That' s the curse binding you…just like the brainwashing of a Cyber-Newtype. How pitiful." He did not look at Banagher in the eyes as he got up from his seat.*

"Well, whatever. Even if you aren't willing, you'll be forced to comply anyway. Try and find those things you deem as answers before that moment arrives."

These assured remarks caused Banagher's hairs to stare. He gave a suspicious look back at Alberto for a moment, and the latter proceeded to reach his hand for the door.

"Really. You're designed too perfectly. It's really annoying."

He gave a piercing glance before stepping through the door. The door panel that closed up immediately let out an abnormally loud sound, causing Banagher's body and mind to let out a jerk as he remained alone in the dim room. He put his clasped hands on his table and slumped weakly on the table. Alberto's shoulder figure still remained in his eyes, and Banagher felt tormented that the impression Alberto gave him was not completely dissimilar to Cardeas.

Part 6

(…We can count ourselves lucky to be able to get back a single " Zee Zulu". The incident in Dakar caused all the patrol fleets roaming around the colonies to gather on Earth's orbit. The " Garencieres" has to leave Earth as soon as possible and leave the absolute defense zone until the preliminary stage is set up.)

The intensity of the scattered Minovsky particles was set at a very low level, but the communication feed of the ship as it moved through the atmosphere was still very bad. Due to the static, the expression on Full Frontal's face, shown on the console's communication monitor, was less visible than usual. Suberoa Zinnerman felt the plaster at the end of his eyes tighten, "Yes…" and answered. He could tell that Alec and Flaste, seated on the steering seat and navigation seat respectively, were pricking their ears from behind their seats.

(The Federation has increased their surveillance frequency, and this communication signal may be tapped on. Please tell me the new coordinates data you received from the Psyco Monitor, captain.)

"The "Unicorn" has fallen into the Federation's hands. I suppose the enemy has already known this new information."

(Despite so, the "Ra Cailum" that reclaimed the "Unicorn" seems to be moving very slowly. It seems that there was a mishap that caused them to lose this new information. Currently, luck still remains on our side.)

The lips below the mask showed a twisted smile as Frontal concluded. He, who gathered the Neo Zeon fleet, was looking down at the commotion on Earth from his flagship, the “Rewloola” . It seemed that the report from the Zeon supporters who got into the political world had already reached his ears at the first moment . Once the Vist Foundation, currently on the “Ra Cailum”, use more of their political power to force the high ranking government officials to submit, the more information would be leaked through the political route. Besides, those Senators who once benefited from the Garvey Enterprise’s business dealings were being investigated privately, and as nobody knew when they would be pursued to take responsibility, there was a tense atmosphere permeating throughout. Without know what kind of changes there would be the next day, people would start to talk due to this restlessness. Whether the entire Federation army finished sorting out their investigations, it probably would not be hard for the “ Garencieres” to force an escape route out.

But to Zinnerman, this currently was not an important thing. It had been 2 and a half day since that incident, and the Federation military’s security on all of Earth’s ground was already elevated to combat level. The Zeon forces everywhere were already being shut down, and at this point, it was not just one or two guerilla groups being eliminated. Even the “Garencieres” had to hide from the satellite surveillance in the skies above the Euro-Asia continent before finally managing to establish contact with the “Rewloola”. The amount of fuel they had left was less than 3 days’ worth, and since there was no place left for them to resupply, they had no choice other than to retreat back to space with their tails between their legs. However, from the conversation he had with Frontal,

Zinnerman managed to hear out on any other possible related information.

The “Rewloola” in space did not receive the relay signal from the Psyco Monitor. In other words, at this point, only the “ Garencieres” had the coordinates data indicated by the “Unicorn” —Zinnerman kept his face from showing the hint of this possibility on his face as he met Frontal in the eyes through the monitor. “ Then, it doesn’t matter even if we leave the “Unicorn” alone?” He asked with an emotionless expression on his face.

(Of course, we’ll send other people to grasp its whereabouts. We can’t be sure that the data from the “Unicorn” will be intercepted. I have already prepared other ships with Psyco Monitors to follow in place of the “Garencieres”. You just have to consider bringing the information back.)

Was I seen through? The ostensibly deliberate reminding voice caused Zinnerman to have this fleeting doubt, and he let loose of all other thoughts as he looked back at Frontal again. He gripped onto the Captain’s armrest that would not be shown on the monitor, “May I ask you about something?” and cautiously asked.

(What is it?)

“Why did you choose to support Mahdi Garvey’s battle?”

Flaste and Alec both turned their faces around in surprise from behind the console, but Zinnerman merely continued to look at

Frontal on the monitor. (Are you unhappy about it?) the masked face asked, "No", and Zinnerman responded, giving a looking indicating that he was the one asking the question.

(That truly wasn't a wise operation.) After two, three seconds of silence, Frontal answered quietly. (If the fact that Neo Zeon took part in this operation was revealed, the losses on our side will surely be significantly. However, Captain, the Federation had never taken this much damage since the asteroid drop 3 years ago. What I want to see is how defiant the public is against the Federation.)

"The public…against the Federation?"

(Leaving aside the Spacenoids, there are also Zeon followers amongst Earthnoids. However, they could only declare their unhappiness by showing their anti-establishment. What will happen of those people see the one-sided brutal massacre on Neo Zeon's side? What exactly will be the response when those people hear the news that it's not a colony or an asteroid being dropped, but a massacre where humans can be heard screaming from close range…? I hope to use this chance to be sure by using the " Descendant of Dubai" as a cushion of the impact. This is to help determine the new direction for Neo Zeon once we get the " Laplace Box" in the future.)

The thin smile under the mask resonated with Mineva's voice as she said, *"He's a dangerous man"*. At this moment, Zinnerman felt a certain tense emotion breaking within him, and the balance that was swaying side to side had tilted to one side. "I see. Understood. " he kept a still expression as he answered. Frontal's eyes under

the anti-glare filter let loose a probing expression, (I'll await your return), and he disappeared from the monitor.

This was already within Zinnerman's expectations, but the masked face had already thrown aside the guilt from its conscience and its hesitation, showing no signs of remorse at all—and even brazenly in front of his subordinates that he was experimenting with public opinion in such a mocking tone. He felt a very indifferent chill rather than fatigue, and clasped his hands together as he leaned on the back of the captain's seat. "Is this okay?" Flaste asked with a meaningful smile.

"You don't look pleased at all, captain."

"You're the one who said that you want to know what Frontal's hiding, not me, right?"

Zinnerman glared back, and Flaste shrugged as he turned forward. Alec moved his large body that even the steering seat could not fit as he looked at Zinnerman and asked, "Then , what do we do now?". The latter closed his eyes, called back the thoughts he suppressed only a moment again, "Change our course ." and declared with his tone being that of a captain.

"True bearing 182. Avoid the sights from the satellites and move to the south Pacific."

Alec blinked his eyes in surprise, showing doubt, and Flaste beside him was tapping at his fingers, looking like if he expected this. if they were planning to mouth above the equator in order to fly into space, he would not mention the Pacific when he gave this

command. “Aren’t we going back to space?” Alec asked, but Zinnerman did not look at him as he looked over at the clouds outside the window in front of him.

“We haven’t saved the princess and Marida yet; we can’t leave just like this.”

“But, our fighting strength alone—”

“You want to go back?” Flaste glared at Alec, seemingly ready to chastise the latter by saying, *You really don’t know anything.* “The Captain never mentioned anything about the Princess, let alone Marida.”

Are you serious? On realizing this, Alec gasped, and his originally suspicious stare at Zinnerman became one of reluctance as he turned his head to the front. It did not matter whether they could do it or not. Ever since the end of the First Neo Zeon War, the “Garencieres” had been protecting Mineva during the rocky times, and to them, the option to leave her behind and return to the “Sleeves” base never existed. There were a lot of things in Zinnerman’s mind that he could not part away from; Mineva, Marida and the “Unicorn” that was the equivalent of the key to the “Box”. “There’s always an order of priority to things”, he said as he scratched his hard beard on his chin.

“It’s true that we can’t do anything now. Right now, all the government organizations have upped their security.”

“Then…”

"Let's get back the "Unicorn"."

Zinnerman's determined tone caused Alec to turn his speechless face around. "We can use that as a trade bait to the Federation for the Princess and Marida. Since they don't have the data on the "Box", this works for us." Zinnerman continued, and Flaste whistled at him as he answered,

"Sounds good. This is how the Garencieres team move. However, it'll be hard to take action on the "Ra Cailum"."

"This is worth a shot. Tell Tunick to focus on the satellite feed, and don't miss out on any of the "Ra Cailum"s actions."

They're like us here, they can't possibly be flying forever. If we focus on their movements, we'll definitely get a change to take action. First, we have to gather our fighting strength. Zinnerman thought as he summoned the map of the South Pacific sea charts on the monitor. "What do we do with the brat?" and then, he heard Alec's question.

"Of course we're going to get them all. That package's worth more here, right captain?"

And just like before, when both of them were sitting and fighting with their stares, Flaste said this with a meaningful look in his heads. Zinnerman recalled Banagher Links eyes that were etched in his, and made an unhappy frown on his still swollen face , "Depends on the situation." as he briefly replied. Flaste gave a bitter smile on his face and retreated behind the back of the navigation seat. soon after the order to change navigation path was

made, the sea of clouds outside the window started to flow sideways quickly.

The “Garencieres” turned its triangular prism ship shape around as it drew a wide arc above the clouds and quickly moved to the southern sea. The ship looked as fast as ever as it escaped the perimeter set by the “sleeves”, and the sun that was dazzling radiantly was the only thing watching over their whereabouts.

Part 7

The large body of the black “Unicorn”, kept within the hangar, looked like it was able to shake the air around it, and the demonic presence it gave was reminiscent of an ancient Eastern demonic sword. Like the “Unicorn” lined beside it, the hangar was surrounded with rope preventing entry, and the specifically designated guards from the Vist Foundation were the ones surrounding them. The rumors that they were still undergoing adjustments seemed to be true, as there were sensors attached to the gondola at the abdomen, and a large number of cables were snaking out from the cockpit. Instead of saying that it was maintenance, it was probably more apt to call it an ‘experiment’. Sub-Lieutenant Watts Stepney looked up at it, “I heard it’s called the “Banshee”.” and nonchalantly said.

“It’s the second unit of the white guy, tested under gravitational conditions. The ones being beside the machine all day seem to be the members of the Augusta Newtype Research Institute.”

“Newtype research? Wasn’t that sealed up long ago?”

Sub-Lieutenant Nigel McGusiness, who had been listening beside, asked back. At this moment, “It’s because it’s not sealed that those guys are here.” Watts answered, seemingly believing in not thinking too much with regards to unexpected situations. Lieutenant Nigel Garrett stood beside both of them as he leaned on the handrail of the catwalk, and after seeing his handsome face, Riddhe held in his sigh as he looked at the “Banshee”. He could see the two Unicorn-type mobile suits lined on the wall opposite from the catwalk inside the mobile suit deck.

It seemed that the mobile suit deck of the “Ra Cailum” was over its capacity as it was docked with the 12 “Jestas” it could contain , the “Delta Plus” and the two “Unicorns”. It was possible to contain these machines only by using the overhaul space deep within the bow and the rear deck that was used for staring the Base Jabbers. The back of the deck was used to store the transport carrier of the “ Banshee”, the “DO-DAI”, which took up a lot of space. In the end, the contingent from the Vist Foundation showed no regards for anyone else, and even set up a forbidden entry zone in a corner of the deck. It was to be expected that Nigel and the other original crew were to feel repulsed by it. The mechanics moving around would show looks of hidden motives, and the atmosphere within the ship was as unfriendly as it could deck.

If there was work, they could at least distract themselves, but the “Delta Plus”, which overexerted itself during the previous battle, was moved to the overhaul space, and the assigned chief mechanic, Sergeant Hanna, was currently carrying out full disassembly. Until the unit became humanoid, there was nothing Riddhe could do, and he could only give a glum look together with the Tri-Stars and stare at the unique machines with lone

horns. *I should have brought the model along*, he carelessly thought about this out of a sudden. He could not contact his father who seemed to be on his way to Dakar, and could not meet Banagher, confined within the ship, as he wanted to. He could not do anything, and did not know his situation. *Might as well turn my back on everything—*

"Haven't you heard of anything, lord Ensign?"

The burly Watts did not realize Riddhe's feelings at all as he gave a gruff voice befitting his body build. "About those white and black mobile suits, are they not related to the orders the Senate Council gave you directly?"

"I don't know. Those guys really annoy me too."

"And you have the cheek to say that. Isn't there an order in the ship to secure that white gy?"

"I heard that it launched from a Neo Zeon ship. Didn't your " Delta Plus" work with it to defeat that mobile armor? It's really too unbelievable to hear you say that you don't know know anything. "

Daryl too followed up on this conversation. Riddhe withstood the urge to click his tongue as he looked back at both of them. "Is that the mobile suit in the UC plan?" but Nigel interrupted, causing Riddhe's heart to race.

"It's written on the shoulder."

Nigel leaned beside the handrail as he pointed his chin, and Riddhe looked over at where he pointed. Over there, the words " Project UC" were clearly indicated on the right shoulder armor of the "Unicorn". Daryl casually added on, "Ah, that's true." And Riddhe slumped onto the wall weakly.

"If it's designed to fight with this guy, then there's a reason for the extremely high specs o the "Jestas". Most likely, they're meant to move beside this guy and clear up all the small fry while this guy charges right at the enemy's core…like a Newtype controlling Psycommu weapons, for example."

After hearing Nigel's plausible deduction, "What, now we're its prey?" Watts grumbled as he twisted his lips, while Daryl said, " That's not right, isn't it? We were planned to be the test pilots for this thing." *How much has Nigel observed regarding this?* The Tri-stars captain merely spoke calmly, "It might be a good thing we aren't the test pilots." as he did not pay heed to Riddhe's probing glance from beside.

"This guy's mobility isn't normal when it transforms into a " Gundam". A normal pilot probably won't last 5 minutes in it. It's impossible to design it to such a ridiculous extent if it wasn't planned to be piloted by Cyber-Newtypes in the first place."

"Cyber-Newtypes…" Daryl's face suddenly turned pale as he muttered this. "With those guys from the Newtype research institute around, I guess you're right." Nigel however said nonchalantly; Riddhe followed his stare and looked at the cockpit from the cockpit. He could see a human silhouette in full black pilot suit from between the gaps formed by the sensors on the

gondola. The pilot's appearance was covered by the helmet visor that was pulled down, but the slender figure could be distinguished from the pilot suit. The pilot looked weak, but the physical body was giving off a certain hardiness, reminiscent of a puppet with a spring inside.

Is that a woman? Riddhe looked at that machine-like pilot's body , and as he leaned his body over the handrail, there was a short and stout man with a contrasting figure there, blocking his sights. It seemed that Alberto sensed Riddhe's stare as he gave an antagonistic glare as he put his hand on the pilot's shoulder and brought her into the cockpit. Riddhe originally thought that he was merely a high-ranking person in the Anaheim Electronics company, but he was an important member of the Vist Foundation . That man, who boarded the ship with the chairperson called Martha, had taken the ship and the "Unicorn" as his personal property. *What in the world is dad doing now*? Riddhe grumbled deep within his heart. *He let the people of the Vist Foundation interrupt, so why hasn't he given me any instructions yet? This is a chance to snatch the "Box" from the Foundation and release the world from the 100 year curse. I abandoned everything and came here in order to pay for the Marcenas' sin—*

"You mean that if we end up becoming this thing's pilot, we might end up being enhanced…?"

Watts whispered as he looked at the back of the pilot who disappeared behind the cockpit hatch. There was already a rumor amongst pilots that a Cyber-Newtype was a synonym of being a vegetable. *Then what about Banagher?* Riddhe pondered, and then shook off this question without an answer before it exploded his

head, and lifted his head at the sound of a machine being activated as it rang throughout the deck. The large shutter leading to the aft landing deck was opening slowly.

The air became wind due to the difference in air pressure, and it flowed into the gap of the shutter that was being opened. As Nigel 's slightly long hair swayed with the wind, Riddhe, who was standing beside him, spotted a small jet on the other side of the shutter. The moveable jet engines below the wings stood vertically, and the machine that was being towed in by a tractor unit entered the mobile suit deck.

"That's a civilian craft."

"Seriously. We sure have a lot of guests coming in."

Watts and Daryl looked dumfounded as they commented, while Nigel continued to give an unceremonious observing look. Riddhe felt shocked as he too looked down at the approximately 10m long mini jet. The mini jet stopped in the middle of the deck with mobile suits overlooking it on both left and right side, and the mechanics immediately ran towards it. the wheels stopped, and once the hatch on one side of the jet opened, Riddhe could see men in black suits walking down the ladder, before a familiar face followed as it appeared in his sights.

"Mineva…?"

Riddhe nudged aside his heart, which was beating loudly as he bent half his body over the handrail. He could see a proud-looking girl flanked by men in suits on both front and back as she walked

down the ladder. *Why is she here?* He felt dizzy as his blank mind suddenly had this thought. *She should be at home. I came here to ensure her safety. Why is she showing herself here? Why is she looking so tense? It's like she was forcefully brought here—*

"AUDREY! AUDREY BURNE!"

The fact that Riddhe did not call out Mineva's name here proved that his sanity was still functioning at least. By the time he realized it, Riddhe had already yelled out, and was starting to wave at the mini-jet parked approximately 50m away from the aft. This alone however wasn't enough for him, and he immediately rushed out. "What's going on?" "Is she someone he knows?" he left behind Watts and the rest as he dashed to the end of the catwalk. He could identity Mineva's chestnut-colored from the back of the "Jesta" fastened on the hangar, her appearance clearly etched in his eyes.

Why must you come here? You can't stay here? There's a malicious intent to make use of you swirling here! Riddhe poked his body from the end of the catwalk, "AUDREY!" but his voice was gone with the wind. He could not bring himself to waste any time further by clicking his tongue as he immediately dashed off to the nearest airlock. If he wanted to move from the catwalk to the deck, he would have to first return back inside the ship, move through the passages, ride the elevator or use the ladder. The ship's construct that was designed for zero gravity use had never made him as spiteful as this moment.

Part 8

Mineva suddenly sensed someone calling out for her, and lifted her head.

The mobile suit deck for any ship that was built looked all too similar. In this wide space, approximately 30m in height and 50m in width, the mobile suits docked in the hangar were lined up like Buddha statues. A lot of the machines' paint was worn off, probably because they were involved in quite a few actual combat situations, and the welding sparks could be seen scattered. She could immediately tell that they were Federation mobile suits, machines with chiseled shoulders standing beside each other, and the emotionless eyes covered with goggles were staring at the wall over it.

Am I thinking too much here? Mineva looked around, and let out a soft sigh. At this moment, a foreign looking object appeared in her sight, causing her to stop. At the only area where a perimeter was set up, the spotlight was on the horn of a certain mobile suit's forehead, dazzling brightly—

"A black "Unicorn"…?"

There was a golden horn atop the pitch black shiny armor, and Mineva could not find any other appropriate vocabulary to describe it. Right beside it was the familiar white "Unicorn", lined side by side with it, and the facemask giving off a certain regal presence was facing the space opposite it. the reason why it looked more slender as compared to the first impression was most probably because of the overly savage look of the black "Unicorn". The pitch black machine with golden ornaments on the armor gave it an appearance beyond that of rigor. Unlike the "Unicorn", which

had a certain comforting harmonic feeling to it, it gave a feeling of indifference, not willing to communicate with anyone. it was most likely that they originated from the same place, and these two machines that could be called sister units actually looked so different…

Since the "Unicorn" is here, Banagher should be somewhere inside this ship, right? Mineva again looked around, only to be greeted by a female voice, "Welcome, Your Highness Mineva Zabi." She turned her face around, and found a middle-aged woman dressed in violet suit standing right in front of her, with several men awaiting behind her.

"I'm the substitute leader of the Vist Foundation, Martha Vist Carbine. The long journey has certainly been tough on you."

The woman said this as she bowed politely; however, her condescending expression was completely different from her tone. *This is the daughter of the Vist family who married into the Anaheim Electronics chairman's family, and if I remember correctly, she should be Cardeas' little sister.* Mineva recalled the information that was investigated before she left Neo Zeon, and at this moment, the woman who called herself Martha took a step forward slowly, her thick perfume scent teasing Mineva's nose.

"You're really young and pretty. This is the inside of a battleship, but please relax, Your Highness, we'll ensure your personal safety."

"Does Senator Ronan Marcenas know about this?"

Once she was brought back to the mansion, Mineva did not have the chance to meet Ronan at all as she was jettisoned off to the plane and sent all the way here. She knew that the jet was sent over from the Vist Foundation, but she did not know what sort of dealing Ronan had with the Foundation, and she did not know the reason why she was brought onto this Federation ship at all. She realized that she did not know the name of this ship at all when she spoke up cautiously. "Of course." However, Martha answered, her deliberate smile not wavering at all.

"We're moving with the same objective as Senator Ronan. This should be your wish itself too, Your Highness."

"My wish…?"

"We want to seal the "Laplace Box"."

Mineva could not help but gulp, and Martha, upon witnessing this, turned her lips that were coated lightly with lipstick into a smile. "I heard that you left Neo Zeon for this reason, Your Highness. I can assure you that the "Box", which will bring about disaster, will be set aside in a place nobody in the Foundation can touch, whether it was, is, or is to come."

Martha's gestures were indicating that this was an act, and when she bowed, her stare looked up at Mineva. *This woman is dangerous.*—the latter's instincts were yelling, making her body tense as she clenched her fists tightly.

Part 9

(…I heard that the "Box" key is left to that "Unicorn". Have you detained its pilot?)

(Yes. He's currently resting inside the infirmary.)

Just when Banagher thought that the air trembled suddenly, a familiar voice immediately echoed in his ears. His body that was lying on the bed immediately bounced up, and he turned around to look at the communication panel that was suddenly lit.

This place, which was used as a detention room, seemed that it was originally a personal room for officers, and there was a 10 inch monitor set up beside the bed. On see the figure of the voice's owner, Banagher felt his gulp become a vomit.

(The infirmary? Is he wounded?)

(The boy's fine. He's just a civilian who ended up riding on the "Unicorn" out of coincidence, but he certainly has the talent to pilot and guts. If you wish, I can arrange for you to meet him after this.)

An unfamiliar woman's voice interrupted, (Sorry to bother you about this.) and Audrey answered back before stepping forward again. The hidden camera that was installed on a certain person's chest was moving after her, and her chestnut-colored hair was swaying on the monitor. The scenery shown was definitely the mobile suit deck of the "Ra Cailum", and she, Audrey Burne, was aboard this battleship. "AUDREY!" Banagher yelled as he reached

his hand for the intercom button of the communication panel. He continued to press the unresponsibe button, “IT’S ME, BANAGHER!” and yelled at Audrey on the monitor.

“NO, AUDREY! YOU MUSTN’T REMAIN HERE! AUDREY!”

Audrey walked off without turning back, and the Vist Foundation’s subordinates surrounded her, sheltering her back that was covered with a white blouse. Banagher punched the monitor, leaped off the bed and rushed to the bedroom. “ SOMEONE! OPEN THE DOOR! LET ME OUT!” He slammed the locked door hard and yelled.

After a few slams , the sound of the lock being opened rang, and the automatic door swung aside. Banagher instinctively backed away, saw the man’s face standing behind the door, and was startled, rooted to the floor.”

“I said it before. Even if you’re unwilling, you’ll have to cooperate one way or another.”

Alberto did not look away as he walked into the room. Banagher turned to look at Audrey on the monitor, before looking back at Alberto again, “Don’t tell me…” and eked out a trembling voice.

“You came all the way here, riding on the “Unicorn”, in order to save her. Then, you should now cooperate with us to save her.”

“You’re despicable!”

"Whatever you say. We can only do this in our positions."

There were Vist subordinates looking inside the room, standing behind Alberto, ostensibly blocking off all exits. *I caused everything here*—once he had this realization, Banagher felt his knees tremble, "Let me speak with Mr—Ensign Riddhe!" he said out the thought he suddenly had.

"That man definitely won't agree with this doing. Audrey should be protected by his family now…!"

"It's useless. We've already struck a deal with the Marcenas' family. Her Highness Mineva will be taken care of by the Foundation."

"What did you say!? Is this something adults should be doing!? "

"Yeah. Thanks to brats like you messing around, the adults certainly suffered quite a bit. You have to empathize with us here."

Alberto's firm stare that was different from before caused Banagher's legs to tremble as he was speechless. The former looked back at the latter, "Since we share the same blood, I'll just give you one advice." and continued,

"Cardeas' father, our grandfather, was killed by our great-grandfather, the leader of the Foundation. Do you know what this means?"

Alberto continued to force this smile on his lips as he brought his face over to Banagher. The latter was pushed back, deep inside the room, and sat on the bed.

"This is the Vist bloodline. In this cursed bloodline, you and I are both just pedestrians. Give up on the naïve thinking that we're relatives. Even father and son have to kill each other, and the Vist family will kill even their own kind to protect the "Box"."

The stare of someone who once killed his father was looking down at Banagher in a twisted way. At that moment, a certain emotion that was forced to its limits let out a creaking sound, and he felt his chest cool down immediately. "Hand over the data of the Laplace Program. You'll get your freedom, and she'll be saved. " Alberto spoke to exert pressure, and Banagher, who looked back at those bloodshot eyes, lowered his face and nodded slightly before he understood what he was doing.

Alberto heaved a sigh of relief, "Oi" and once called out at the door, Banagher could sense the former taking a step back. The three men on the passage walked into the room, and the feet clad in black leather shoes entered his eyes. He could see one of them taking out handcuffs and raised his hands. Once that man closed in, Banagher got up and used the momentum to send a headbutt into the man's belly before his hands were grabbed.

The man groaned as he was sent flying back. Alberto, who caught him from behind, fell back on his backside, and the black-clad Foundation subordinates were in disarray. He darted below a subordinate who immediately leaped forward, lowered

his head, and charged towards the exit before rushing out of the room in a forward lunge. “You…!” as Alberto growled , Banagher shut the door intently.

Banagher did not have time to lock the door. “Oi, hold it!” an angry growl rang through the corridor, and the guards with white gun holsters on their waists were pursuing right after him. However, he continued to run, and he followed his memory when he was first taken to this place as he made a right turn on the first cross junction, hoping that he could head towards where the elevator was.

The images displayed on the communication panel did show the hangar of the mobile suit. Audrey was detained in the mobile suit deck together with the rendezvous machine, and at this point, she was definitely at the bottom of the deck. *What can I do once I get there?* he could not think at all as he pressed the elevator button. “ Don’t let him get away! Get him!” Alberto’s voice immediately rang from behind, and Banagher, who realized that he had no time to wait for the elevator, hurriedly darted down the stairs beside the passageway.

He immediately dashed down the extremely steep steps that were just like a ladder as its name implied. He arrived onto the lower deck, the siren rang, and right at that moment, two crewmen waiting on the corridor turned their faces at Banagher in surprise, “Oi…” a man spoke up, wanting to raise his hand, only to be sent flying away Banagher slid down the next set of stairs before the growls reached him. He rushed down seven levels worth of steeps as the many footsteps loomed behind him, and rushed to the corridor that should lead to the mobile suit deck.

The air flowed slightly, and the faint smell of grease whiffed in, indicating to him where the mobile suit was. Audrey's heartbeat that was there, and the touch that indicated the beginning of everything, arrived along with the wind, and he continued to run forward despite the alarms and the people's growls right after him . He turned at a cross junction, reached the end of a T-junction, turned right, and nearly knocked into someone else running over at him.

"You're…!"

The young man dodged behind to avoid a head-on collision, and widened his eyes. "Mr Riddhe…" Banagher muttered, but the pursuers' footsteps caused him to look back again. He immediately grabbed Riddhe's uniform and pulled him over,

"Ensign Riddhe. Audrey's on this ship now. The Vist Foundation wants to use her as a hostage."

"Hostage…!?" Riddhe gasped, and lifted his lower jaw. "Wait!" "Oi, get that guy!" the yells came from the corridor behind Banagher, and he gave a pleading stare at Riddhe. *It's all on you. If it's you, you'll definitely be able to understand.* Banagher had relied on Riddhe when their mobile suits interacted with each other, and looked at the latter, who was gritting his teeth. Riddhe lowered his brown eyes, and gave Banagher a bitter expression.

"…Go."

He muttered with a barely audible voice, and took the fire extinguisher installed on the wall. “The mobile suit deck’s straight ahead. Hurry.” Riddhe informed Banagher, who did not have the time to thank as he darted forward. The sound of the fire extinguisher being sprayed overpowered the pursuers’ footsteps. The rattled guards’ angry roars and shouts could be heard on the corridor, and entered Banagher’s ears through the white smoke.

The white smoke of the fire extinguisher was pushed by the air flow. Banagher opened the air lock before it caught up, and suddenly stopped upon seeing a wide space in front of him. He could see the mechanics who were stunned by this sudden alarm, the tractor units on their paths, and the cranes that were dangling from the ceiling approximately 30m. As he spotted the mobile suits standing there, he looked around this large cavity. He could see a group of men dressed in black at the bottom of the inner wall opposite where he was, and there was a woman in white blouse surrounded by these hulking men, fresh in his eyes, walking with her back straight.

“AUDREY!”

Banagher yelled as he gathered his entire strength in the form of a voice. Audrey stopped in her tracks and looked over, meeting him in the eyes. Despite the fact that she was smaller than a thumb at this point, he could clearly see her expression. Her emerald eyes were wide open, and he could even see himself as a reflection in her eyes.

“Banagher…!”

Audrey's mouth moved as she took a step towards him. The men surrounding her immediately blocked her way, and the figure in white blouse was covered by the men in black suits as she disappeared. An unfamiliar middle-aged woman looked over at him unhappily, *Such insolence. Let go of me!* Audrey's struggling voice gradually faded away, and as Banagher spotted her being dragged to the air lock at the inner wall, he saw nothing else in his eyes. The distance to that point was 40m at maximum, and as his body estimated this subconsciously, he leaped off the floor, his palms ostensibly scratching the floor apart as he sprinted.

At that moment, his right hand that was reaching behind was grabbed, and he was dragged over forcefully. In an instant, his body that was afloat in the air slammed into the wall behind, and a blunt impact struck the back of his head. He could not understand what exactly was going on, and he reached for his numb head as he spotted a person in black pilot suit amidst his fading consciousness.

The uniformly black fabric had golden stripes on it, showing the slender body of the pilot. On the left chest of this armor-like like vest covering the torso, there was the symbol of a Unicorn indicating the Vist Foundation, marked with golden lines as well. It looked like a personalized pilot suit for the "Unicorn"—a complete opposite indicating a stark contrast between light and darkness, a black color giving a demonic image. Banagher did not think too much about what it meant as he looked over the shoulder of the pilot suit in front of him, trying his best to look for Audrey. He tried to reach his leg forward, but a hand shot out like a bullet, grabbing his throat. In less than a second, his body was pushed back and slammed into the wall again.

The hand pressed down on Banagher's windpipe like a plier, not moving at all. Stricken by the fear of suffocation, he flailed his limbs and tried to escape. However, the pilot's head, covered by the helmet visor, did not move, and the slender body provided an unimaginable strength as it forced Banagher onto the wall. The flailing arms hit the helmet, the visor switch was immediately clicked, and a familiar pair of blue eyes appeared in his sights.

"Miss Marida…!?"

It seemed, deep within the azure pupils ostensibly leading to the sea, a certain emotion jolted for an instant. Of course, Banagher felt that he smelled her sweet body fragrance when he was facing off against that black "Unicorn". He felt the hand on the neck relax , and shout, "Miss Marida, it's me! Banagher Links!" He used this opportunity to grab her by the shoulder, and the most he was about to bring the face covered by the helmet to himself, Marida shook off all doubt as her eyes showed killing intent.

The hollow eyes were darker than when they first met, and were reminiscent of a cave—Banagher felt a chill as he wanted to draw back, but it was too late as Marida slammed her knee into his gut, and a piercing blow felt like it was about to stab through his spine, shaking his entire body. His legs lost strength, and he fell limply on the floor and squeezed out a voice, "Mari…da…". He reached his hand and grabbed the pilot suit. Marida remained unmoved as her legs were spread apart, and as both of them looked at each other, Banagher again sensed that there was a hesitation in the bottom of the other person's eyes, "Ple Twelve!" only to hear this growl.

"Don't let this guy escape. Restrain him."

Alberto, who was standing at the door of the airlock, was panting, and his shoulders were rising and falling as he growled a command. Marida's eyes that were looking down at Banagher became dark hollows again, and the hand grabbing his throat regained strength. As he was being lifted to the wall again, Banagher used his hands to grab Marida's hands. *Miss Marida, please wake up. Audrey—Princess Mineva is over there.* He tried to call

out to her with all his will, hoping for the resonance in thoughts they once had; however, what appeared in the bottom of her eyes was a hollow where light could not shine into. Banagher's hand was easily shaken aside, and his arm was restrained as she immediately sent him sprawling on the floor.

"Banagher!" Audrey's call could be heard faintly. The stone-faced Marida betrayed no expression as she stared down coldly at Banagher on the floor. The eyes overlapped with the black "Unicorn", and Banagher bit his lips tightly. He gathered his thoughts at Audrey's presence that was moving away, summoned all his remaining strength, and yelled out,

"AUDREY!"

There was no response. He was dragged up by the arms above his head and brought away from the mobile suit deck. Marida did not respond as she stood around in her black pilot suit like a puppet, her eyes still within a corner of Banagher's sights.

Part 10

The tropical forests, which were said to cover 14% of the landscape in the past, once took up 3% of the land. It was said that this figure rose back to 6% during the Universal Century. The primary reason behind this accomplishment was the countermeasures against global warming during the old age, and the reforestation started once the Space Migration officially began. But at the same time, the indigenous people who relied on woodcutting for a living lost their jobs. They did not get proper education to gain decent jobs, and could not find any jobs even if

they wanted to make the switch. These people who were the " excessive" were naturally deported into space first, and were living in the colonies where they would not suffer famines or floods. The highly civilized, highly educated did not think about what the actual people involved were thinking as they showered the latter group with good intentions.

The descendants of those 'excessive population' stayed in the tropical rainforests that were protected, located within the clustered jungle region of Eastern New Guinea, 17 years ago. These colony residents who were living behind the moon, the people who were abandoned furthest away from Earth, arrived here with the help of the armor called mobile suits, and took part in the invasion of Earth with their comrades scattered along the continent. However, most of the squads could not defend the frontline that was overextended, and could not return back to their motherland—the Republic of Zeon, and could only end up scattered in the forests.

There were the "Zakus", the main forces of the republic, the " Goufs" that were developed on Earth's frontline bases, and the amphibious "Goggs" machines. The monoeyed giants used to trample through the forest and fight against the Federation army, but at this point, it was covered by the forest and moss, and the cockpit that was gradually rotting away because a nest of poisonous snakes. To the salvage industy, this was a gold mine. However, there had not been any incidents of anyone ransacking the mobile suits lying asleep in this place ever since the war end. That was because of a widely accepted misinformation that a core reactor exploded in this place before, and the radiation spread around.

In fact, that was a mean to prevent others from approaching this place, and the old battlefield was already covered by green shrubs for a long time. As of this night, It had been 17 years, 1 month and 15 days, when the first “Zaku” landed on this land—counting from the time the 3rd wave of the Republic’s forces pushed into the South Pacific. What may be the last two remaining “Zakus” were strolling through the forests; their soles that were as large as minivans stepped on the reddish-brown dirt loudly, and the multi-layered sea of trees let out hissing sounds. The trees in this area were more than 30m tall, and thus, the giants that were 17m tall would not be protruding their heads out. It was impossible to see two machines moving from above, and only the birds that were woken from their sleep flew out of the branches away from the machines’ paths, their chirping were the only thing rang under the moonlight.

The MS-05L “Zaku” walking in front is a variant of the initial Zaku-type version, and it had a large sub generator behind it, which also powered the long-barreled beam rifle it was wielding. This sniper-type “Zaku” that was produced in limited numbers at the end of the war could be considered the latest amongst the “ Zaku I”, commonly known as the “Old Zakus”. However, the fact that it had become an antique on this day would never change. Following behind was the MS-06K “Zaku Cannon”, a first generation machine that did not have a moveable frame as well. The cannon equipped on its right shoulder looked powerful, but also gave the feeling of the distance in age. As both machines were products produced before the linear seats were created, they did not have all-view monitors, but rectangular flatscreen panels in the cockpit for navigation.

A crescent moon covered in clouds was shown on one of the monitors. If one were to look over, it seemed that the glowing colonies could be seen in the middle of the stars that littered the sky, but their homeland, located behind the moon—the Side 3 currently renamed as the Zeon Republic could not be seen. "It's so far…" Yomen Kirks muttered as he narrowed his eyes at the moon that would appear and disappear between the trees from time to time. (What?) the neighboring unit Kandle asked back through the wireless communicator, but Kirks ignored it as he let the feeling of the control stick seep into his hand slowly after having not held it for 3 years. The rhythm of the main generator reached Kirks fingertips, and before the breath of the still-alive "Zaku I" could reach inside his body, he stepped on the brakes and let the machine stop.

"This area alone should be enough, right? It'll be troublesome to go back if we move too far from the base."

He looked up at the crown of trees covering him from above as he called out into the wireless communicator. There were no stares from anyone else in this area deemed as a radioactive quarantine zone, and in this forest hailed to have 40 of all lifeforms in the world, the nocturnal animals that had not changed even since the ancient days were letting their howls echo through. The "Zaku Cannon" stopped in its tracks and stood to the rear left side of Kirks' machine (Yes…) Kandle's choked on his words as his voice came in through the wireless communicator.

(It's such a pity. We actually have to bury the machines we kept up till now with our own hands…)

"It can't be helped. My Sniper Zaku and your Zaku Cannons are just walking antiques now. Since we can't find anyone to reclaim it, we can only leave it here."

(That's true…but they can move though.)

"It's only a matter of time before they stop moving anyway if they aren't recharged. We haven't activated it for quite a few years. You should be rejoicing that they're able to make it all the way here."

Kirks released his hands from the control stick and stroked the console in front of him. "We can probably earn a lot if we can sell these to a weapons fan…but this guy probably doesn't want to be treated as a plaything." Kirks muttered to himself, and use this surge of emotions to undo the seatbelt of the seat. He took out some highly potent plastic explosives from his spare parts and connected the cables to the countdown timer. He installed them below the console seat, switched off the light of the main generator , and opened the door.

The humid air covered his entire body, and his skin that was more than 50 years old was aging slower, but sweating at this point. As long as the explosion was triggered, the cockpit would be blown to bits, and the "Zaku I" would be in the equivalent of a death state. Kirks pulled out the lift wire used to get up and down the machine, and landed on the double-layered armor at the abdomen, "Don't blame me." He said to his beloved machine.

"Some idiot who started a fireworks display in Dakar, and those Federation dogs came killing after us. We can only slip away here.

I want to bring you guys along, but based on whatever the sponsor said, it seems that sacrifices are necessary."

Kirks put his foot on the metal ring of the lift wire and activated the countdown wire. The countdown timer set on the seat started to tick down, and the red numbers of the 5 minute time limit looked exceptionally eye-catching in the cockpit with its lights switched off.

"Our sponsors want to pacify those Federation dogs, so we have to create proof that the Zeon remnants were rounded up for him. As payment, those dogs will let us off. Well, this is embarrassing; we came all the way here from our homeland, and we even lived till now…"

The anti-Federation organization acting as their sponsor, EGUM , would only accept machines of at least the 3rd generation, and the machines had were moved away from New Guinea through all sorts of means. This was the prelude to the extinction of the Zeon remnants on Earth, and the Shinbu base that had always been the largest rally point in the Southern Pacific was moving towards its end—this closure was too unbearable, no different from an escape in the middle of the night, but Kirks had no intention of blaming those people fromEGUM.

The higher-ups ofEGUM, who were aiming to overthrow the Federation government, hoped that the Earth army continued its current military production, and the National Defense senators used the profits of the war economy to control the politics. The anti-government forces were aiming for the moment the Senate started to audit its budget and launch a limited terrorist attack to

increase the budget required; and in this sense, EGUMand Neo Zeon were practically waiting for the Federation government to take action. Their time of feeding their subordinates and disguising themselves as Neo Zeon was finally about to come to a close. They lost a homeland they could return to, and what they could only rely on was the belief that they could revive Zeon—no, the people who had things they could believe in were all dead. The terrorist had fallen to the extent of being a mercenary, and he dragged his body, rendered lethargic by the humidity, to live a haphazard life. Now, this man could finally clear off the pretense he had in the past, and that was all.

In this situation, the "Sleeves" that were living in space were not too different. Perhaps the Dakar incident was the last smoke lit , foretelling that they would soon reach annihilation. In the end, once the coexistence with the Federation, the hired terrorists all over the world would be faced with unemployment. If the Zeon Republic dissolves in Universal Century 100, the name of Zeon would vanish completely, and people like him would probably devolve into real ghosts. "We could have ended things off with a bang." Kirks squeezed out these heartfelt words from his bitter chest as he turned his bitter smile away from the cockpit.

"There was that Delaz Conflict, and then there were the two Neo Zeon wars. There were so many chances for you to appear, but for some reason, I can't send myself to my death here. Kandle's about to have his 3rd brat here. That guy was just a snotty brat during the descent, and now he's a decent father here. It's no wonder you and I are old now…"

The middle-aged man's face, which had useless flesh gathered as he brazenly lived his tough life, was reflected off the switched-off monitor panel. The buzzing of the insects' wings grazed past his ears, and Kirks gave himself a slap on the face, suddenly felt embarrassed, trembled and lowered his eyes, saying, "Bye then. Go over there and wait for me first." After this short goodbye, Kirks left the cockpit. Suddenly, there was a communication call, (Leader! We got a code. It's from the sky!) and Kandle called up as Kirks was about to reach his hand for the lift wire switch.

"From the air? A Federation patrol?"

Kirks immediately brought his upper body into the cockpit and pressed the call button. In this case, it would be earlier than what they expected. *The Federations should be starting their search tomorrow* . The misinformation of this place being contaminated by radiation had been keeping people at bay, and since Kirks and his company had been hiding in this place all this while, he did not feel that the scout planes would fly by here. He regretted switching off the main generator as he looked sidelong the flank of the abdomen at Kandle's "Zaku Cannon". (No, this is…) Kandle muttered as his gasp could be heard clearly through the wireless communicator.

(It's a secret code used by the Zeon army, a code used during the 3rd drop!)

Kirks' heart instantly stopped, and then started to beat again. He took the earphones set on the seat and brought his ears over to them. The sound that was similar to the old Morse code entered

his old brain through his eardrums, awakening his memories. It was a code he memorized in his head 17 years ago. At that time, he was encased inside a HRSL capsule together with his mobile suit, and he had been listening to that voice until the moment he was launched down to low orbit. *When my fear and excitement rang in cadence, that was the code—!*

"Please…provide assistance…give the Federation…a good one …?"

Kirks inadvertently uttered these words out as he deciphered this code, and the sound of the words caused his heart to race again. At the same time, the sound of an engine, akin to that of the wind, passed by from above, and Kirks looked up at the sky through the canopy of trees. The crescent moon was giving off a thin and sharp light, and a small dot with a trail of smoke appeared before this light. It was a transport ship with its navigation lights off—no, from its extremely long shape, it seemed to be a VTOL-type ship returning to Earth.

(Leader…) Kandle let out a puzzled voice "Cut off the wireless communication. Remain on standby.) Kirks instinctively ordered and continued to watch the ship as it flew through the night ship. It was calling out with a code used during Earth's invasion, and most probably, it was a ship sent in from ship. Kirks could not think of what sort of effect it would bring as he decided to cut the countdown of the bomb. *BEEP.* The numbers were stopped, indicating a time of less than 2 minutes, and his heart continued to beat in the cockpit of the "Zaku I", unwilling to fade away.

Chapter 2

Part 1

"Torrington Base?"

It was a name Alberto had never heard of before, and he could not help but parrot it in his mouth again. "Right, it's a Federation base located in Australia." Martha answered while seemingly annoyed by this hassle.

"After that Zeon remnant attack, it seemed that the Central government has forgotten about that place. The base is surrounded by wilderness without people, so it shouldn't attract a lot of attention even if the "Ra Cailum" heads there. We're going there to get on a ship to space."

Martha sank into a sofa that had brand new cushions and sighed. "Looks like our holiday in the Mediterranean is going to be delayed." She rested her head on the back of the sofa as she gave a glance aside with that bewitching expression on her face. Ever since she brought Mineva Zabi onto the ship, she had been trying to show off her bewitching charms. Alberto gulped, "Aren't we taking this ship to space?" and asked with a stiff voice.

"We can't rely on this ship that exchanges information with Ronan if we want to find the "Box", right? Besides, it seems that Captain Bright is a sly old fox that's not easy to deal with. We have to find a way to keep the "Ra Cailum" on Earth."

Martha finished, and closed her mouth, ostensibly annoyed to talk any further. It was ostensibly the sight of a chairwoman who just finished a day's worth of work and lounging in a suite room, whether it was the 5m long room isolated from the bedroom or the thoroughly carpeted floor, but of course, this place was not a hotel. This VIP room was installed in a corner of the "Ra Cailum", and was only used when special guests visit the ship. From the small window, the Indian Ocean 1000m below could be seen from the sky. This room was the last arrangement Captain Bright made when Martha demanded to have the commander room. As the commander and captain, Bright was staying inside the captain's room, and the commander's room that was often kept empty should be okay for anyone's use, but this was a serious problem to the military. The disputes between Martha and Bright had been becoming a common scene to the crew, but it could be said that this room was the start of the dispute between the two.

In fact, this was not the reason behind Martha's fatigue and anxiousness. "Then, how's it going?" Martha stopped rubbing her eyes and gave a sharp glance as she questioned, causing Alberto's shoulders to jerk in shock.

"Well…he insists that he won't provide the correct information if we don't release Her Highness Mineva."

"It has been two days, and you haven't made any progress? How useless."

She frowned as she reached her hand for the coffee mug on the table. It had been two days since they used Mineva Zabi as a

hostage, and 4 days had passed since the day they reclaimed the " Unicorn". Alberto's interrogation on Banagher was completely futile, and the former could only lower his eyes, lifting his eyes to peek at Martha's expression from time to time.

"Maybe he's just bluffing about the next coordinates pointing to space? I don't want to be led on a wide goose chase."

"Hm…but it appears that the appearance of Her Highness Mineva was a great shock to him. I feel that there's no room for him to bluff his way. He's still a kid no matter how he forces things—"

"He's Cardeas' child after all. Don't forget that."

Martha interrupted with a forceful tone as she set aside the coffee mug somewhat violently. The sound of the china clashing reached Alberto's ears, and he hurriedly lowered his stare to the floor.

"He's obstinate, stubborn, and gives the look that he's bearing the weight of the world…you inherited your mother's characteristics, but that child called Banagher is practically a clone of Cardeas. They were definitely living separate from each other. How inexplicable."

Martha's voice softened as she made this conclusion, and got up from the sofa. She walked to the window and looked at the ocean surface that was awaiting dusk. Her slender back profile appeared in the sunset, and her long shadow was dragged till Alberto's feet.

"But perhaps he was not lying. The chances of the "Laplace Box " being in Founder Syam's hands are very high, and I don't think that grandfather's cryo room would be located on Earth."

Only a few people, namely, the Foundation leader and the direct associates to the Founder knew the location of Syam Vist's cryo room—the room installed with cold sleep installation. The Founder's direct associate organization was a different entity from the Foundation, and the common practice was that the Foundation leader was to take charge and manage both. With the current leader dead, there was no way Martha could make contact. After Cardeas' death, Martha once tried to investigate the information she received thoroughly, but she did not find even an avenue with the Founder's direct organization, let alone where the cryo room was located. The extent of this secrecy made Alberto and Martha deduce and believe firmly that the "Box" was hidden in the hidden location of a Founder.

The problem was that without the recognition of the Founder, and without the knowledge of the "Box", there was no way Martha could be accepted officially as the Foundation's leader. She managed to get the approval of her family simply by proposing to prevent the "Box" from being opened, and got up to the seat of the substitute leader, but there definitely was not just one executive amongst the Foundation's management who was repulsed by her forceful actions. The Founder Syam had already known the truth behind Cardeas death, and when adding everything together, there was no guarantee that he was trying to prevent her plan. Alberto timidly looked at the back of the person in front of him, and Martha probably sensed that she was on thin ice as her back, covered by the shadow, looked even more tense than before.

"We still have to carry out the estimates for our course. I want to get the correct coordinates before we leave Earth…well, never mind. He'll have to accompany us until the end. Let's try to convince him slowly by bringing Her Highness Mineva along."

Martha turned her face back, and the temporal moment of feebleness disappeared from her face, replaced with a radiant smile. The shadow reaching Alberto's feet went away, and once he sensed the usual atmosphere of isolation descend upon them again , "About this." he said tentatively.

"If we want to bring the "Banshee" together with the specimen into space, I suppose it's best if she doesn't take the same ship as Banagher or Her Highness."

"Why?"

"They knew each other before the adjustments. If there's a long time interaction, it'll probably cause a mental burden on the specimen. President Bentner also reported that there seems to be signs of that—"

"Alberto."

Martha looked like she was mocking a child as she showed a pitiful bitter smile on her face, causing Alberto to be unable to finish what he wanted to say. "From what I hear, you aren't talking about a 'specimen', but showing your concern for a 'lover'. " The words that followed caused his body to suddenly heat up.

"Your protection for her ends here. The reason you're chosen as her master is because the data shows that opposite genders are easier to control. As long as the memory in her mind is reset to zero, this relationship will end. You should understand, right?"

Martha walked towards Alberto as her blond hair let out a rasping sound and the strong perfume aroma swarmed him. *It's the smell of night.* As he immediately thought, her fingers touched his lower belly, "If you like to play with dolls, it's fine." and her whisper entered through his ears.

"But is this good? She can only use her mouth."

He felt the pressure gathering below his belly for an instant vanish because of this line, and inadvertently withdrew back as he glared back at Martha. "WAKE UP!!" The angry chiding voice suddenly rang like a slap to his face.

"If unit 1 is the Unicorn, the "Banshee" as unit 2 is the lion. It's just like the symbolism on that tapestry, they're the complimentary beasts protecting the "Box". You're the successor to the Vist Foundation, so you better make them listen to you."

The heavy presence of the tapestry, "The Lady and the Unicorn " that was moved Vist residence in the "Magallanica", appeared in Alberto's mind, dampening his burning head. The rage that suddenly swelled up in him a moment ago became vague because of this, and he could only lower his head quietly.

"If you can't make them object, you'll be left to feed on the scraps. Right now, even though the "Unicorn" is chained up, it continues to roam the wilderness. If you don't want to lose to your little brother, you better not let go of the lion."

Little brother. This term, which bore no relation and yet felt extremely realistic, seeped into Alberto's heart, and the last ounce of will to argue back melted. His restrained body and mind were hardened, as he felt himself sinking into floor as he answered with a murmur, "…yes." . Martha snorted back and turned her face away, obviously having nothing to inform left.

Part 2

Alberto arrived outside the room, and found Marida Cruz waiting at the door. He gasped as he saw the deep blue eyes looking right at him, and averted his gaze as he walked down the corridor with her behind. "…Are you alright?" He asked.

"Yes. I had President Bentner carry out the adjustments."

Marida followed Alberto on the right side as she answered with a monotonous voice. Two days after her direct meeting with Banagher, her neural waves were once messed up to a point that she nearly could not resonate with the psycommu, and though the symptoms had subsided, the frequency of the headaches she had was obviously increasing. Bentner indicated that Marida took hypnotism with drugs, and that they would need to carry out external operations if they wanted to carry out proper ' adjustments'. Since they did not have the time to carry out the

operations, they could only carry out treatments against the symptoms to ease and eliminate the headaches caused by the reactions.

But could she still remain as herself even after the operation on the brain? No, if everyone's mind could be rewritten, there would be no need to let her remain as herself. It was just like what Martha said in her mocking, he was just restrained by meaningless thoughts. Alberto thought to himself as looked over his own shoulder at Marida, dressed in Vist Foundation formal clothing. Her original consciousness was sealed by drugs and hypnosis, but she did not seem as helpless as those of sleepwalkers, and her footsteps seem no different from an ordinary person. However, there was no shred of emotion in her eyes that were looking back at Alberto, and they looked like two hollow glass eyes, extremely unnatural.

He thought that those were the eyes of a puppet. The deep blue eyes that once covered him, the eyes of the woman who had both fortitude and gentleness were not present. Once he confirmed this, his chest felt a little gloomy, and he stopped in the middle of the corridor. He looked back at Marida who stopped as well, and averted his sights, "…Don't endure it if you're having it tough." He squeezed out a voice as he said,

"If you feel the slightest bit unwell, tell me."

"Yes."

"The "Banshee" is not an ordinary mobile suit. If you can't perform your best like usual, it'll affect the machine's abilities."

"Yes, I'll do my best."

The glass pearl-like eyes did not waver at all as Marida merely answered blankly. *Play with dolls,* Martha's voice rang in his mind, and an inevitable rash of anxiety suddenly rushed up his heart, " DO YOU UNDERSTAND OR NOT!?" he yelled clumsily,

"IF YOU FIND IT UNBEARABLE, UST SAY IT. IF YOU SAY THAT YOU CAN'T CONTINUE TO PILOT IT, I'LL GET THEM TO SWITCH YOU OUT!"

Alberto inadvertently grabbed Marida by her upper arms and looked into those dull-looking hollow eyes. However, the latter did not back away, and her unwavering eyes merely blinked once.

"If you have that intent, I can take you away from here if you want to. Think more for your own sake, I—"

"Is that an order?"

The thoroughly emotionless stare and voice cornered Alberto, and his arms lost strength. He grabbed Marida by the arms, but he just could not make a proper grip. "This isn't what I mean…!" Alberto spoke halfway through, "Is that woman the pilot of the " Banshee"?" However, a third person's voice caused him to jolt with shock.

He looked back, and found Riddhe Marcenas standing at the cross junction of the corridor, "It confounds me to think that this lady here is a Cyber-Newtype." Riddhe said as he frowned and approached Alberto. *Since when has that guy been standing there*

watching? Alberto resisted the urge to click his tongue and turned to face Riddhe, ostensibly trying to block Marida's sights.

"She's most likely a kidnapped orphan, am I right? Does the Vist Foundation deal with human trafficking too?"

"What is it you want, Ensign Riddhe?"

Alberto used his hand to restrain Marida, who had an intent to fight, and gave a refusing look to the man in officer uniform in front of him, telling him not to approach. At about approximately 2m distance, Riddhe stopped in his tracks and, "I hope to meet Mineva Zabi." He said fiercely.

"Just 5 minutes. I'm the one who brought her to Earth in the first place. There're some things I want to know."

"I should have said before that it's impossible. Currently, Her Highness Mineva is under the protection of the Foundation. Even if it's the prince of the Marcenas' family, we can't allow Her Highness to meet an officer of the Federation."

"Then let me see Banagher." Riddhe continued to mutter as his fists showed the restrained anger. "I was ordered directly by the Senate Council, and it's my duty to report everything that happens on this "Ra Cailum" to the superiors. As a civilian, you have no right to give me instructions."

"Unfortunately, I can't allow that each. If we're talking about authority, I'm acting under the authority of the Senate Council chairman. If you want a request to talk directly, please obtain the permission of the superior."

Upon seeing the speechless Riddhe, he felt like gloating over it. He moved his legs that were still, walked by the other man, "First, a family issue isn't something the military should interfere with, right?" and added.

"Banagher Links is the son of the ex-Foundation leader, Cardeas Vist. He's an illegitmate child, but he does have the Vist family name."

"Banagher's a member of the Vist family…?"

Stupefied. Riddhe's face showed this description as he frowned and turned his widened eyes at Alberto. *During the escape two days ago, this man once intended to help Banagher escape. The situation surrounding the "Box" is one thing, but what sort of change will happen to his emotional state after the sense of camaraderie with Banagher as allies?* Alberto sneered, "You should understand, right?" and deliberately emphasized in a cocky manner.

"This is simply gossip, nothing to do with the "Box" and the " Unicorn". His existence itself is a shame to the family. I hope that you as an outsider will ask less next time."

Upon seeing Riddhe's legs crumble as he retreated to the wall, Alberto felt that he vented out all his frustrations, and intended to

leave the scene. However, a little snicker suddenly rang, causing him to stop in his tracks.

Riddhe was leaning against the wall as his body, arched forward, trembled, and his throat let out a croaking laugh. His voice got louder, “This is really amazing?” he let out a stiff laughter, and his laughing voice entered Alberto’s voice.

“So I’ve been actually fighting against the 100-year-old enemy… even if this is caused by the “Box”, this is really set up too perfectly . It’s really a joke.”

Riddhe’s bitter smile had a tint of gloominess to it, and he slammed his trembling fist at the wall. Alberto felt a chill that could cool his heart, “What do you mean?” and frowned as he asked. “Go ask Syam Vist yourself!” Riddhe answered back furiously as his expression changed, and turned a hideous look at Alberto.

“What did your Founder do 100 years ago, and how did he get the “Box”, build the Foundation? Once you know that, you can only laugh dryly at it.”

The bitterness swelled out from Riddhe’s shoulders as well, and before Alberto could ask, he turned away and left. The unexpected counter was not the only thing that shocked Alberto, and it felt like there was something more basic shaking his inner heart as he stared at that back with the speechless Marida.

Alberto clearly remembered the Foundation’s history, when he married into the Vist Foundation. However, the basic development

of the Foundation—how Syam obtained the "Laplace Box", and the "Box" itself were classified. There were no reasons for any outsiders to know about it, and the family members did not care about it. The Vist Foundation was a huge establishment, the "Box" had become a revered object that would not normally become a conversational topic, and nobody would talk about the Foundation Syam as well. Alberto had not talked to him ever since he retired from his position as the leader of the Foundation. Alberto himself only knew of the other man when he was introduced as the great-grandson during the grand retirement party, but that was just a vague memory from his youth.

Despire this, Riddhe sounded like he knew Syam. He called the Vist Foundation his 100-year-old enemy, and told Alberto to understand how Syam obtained the "Box". *As the descendant of the first prime minister of the Federation government, maybe he's hiding some secret that's not to be known?* Alberto had this vague understanding as he felt an unknown chill surge up his body, and he looked very tentative as he stared at the back that was leaving.

Does he know what's inside the "Box"—?

Part 3

The woman summoned onto the monitor in the second communication room was in her twenties, and her beauty could be described as coquettish, a feature one would wonder whether it existed just for her. She had a nice look, but her alluring features

could be mistaken as opportune areas as she was especially attractive. Perhaps this was a type men would say that they might like.

(I'm Beltorchika Irma, and I'll be reporting the results of the investigation you requested in lieu of senior manager Stephanie.)

Even so, the green-filled eyes had an adamant glint that would not allow others to approach easily. Her proper greeting of a refined lady caused Bright to feel that he was overwhelmed in terms of momentum. "Yes, nice to meet you, Beltorchika." He greeted back and looked around the empty communication room for no meaningful reason.

"I didn't think that you'll be the one reporting. Are you working at the Luio Chamber of Commerce?"

(I'm not affiliated as a Luio employee. Please view me as a freelancer."

Beltorchika used her hand to tidy her blond hair that was cut short and gave a somewhat stiff smile. (Because of my relations with Kayaba, senior manager Stephanie has been taking care of me , and Mr Kai Shiden would often come by too.)

"Oh…it sounds like there's quite a few people both you and I know of.)

Bright said after giving a stiff smile. The reason why both sides could not show their honest smiles was probably because of the huge hollow they saw in each other, the man called Amuro Ray.

After the One Year War, there was an internal conflict which divided the Earth Federation army—the “Gryps Conflict”, and Bright joined the Anti Earth Union Group, while Beltorchika joined the assistance group “Karaba”. “Karaba” had its base located on Earth, and so, Beltorchika hardly had any interaction with Bright, who was in the base. However, Bright once inadvertently heard of Beltorchika from Amuro Ray, who joined “Karaba“ as well.

The Titans were a radicals rightist military organization which came to power in the Federation army by expanding their influence in the namesake of purging the Zeon remnants, and once they were overthrown, the AEUG and “Karaba”, which were rebel organizations, naturally ended their roles. Both organizations were absorbed by the government, and as their groups got destroyed, Bright and the other military men managed to return to their normal squads, but volunteers like Beltorchika, who were civilians, disappeared from the spotlight. Some people felt disappointed that the AEUG got absorbed and went off to join the anti-government forces as guerillas, while Bright heard from his old contacts in the past that quite a few people continued on in the information trading business. He thought that Beltorchika would be the latter case here. When the Gryps Conflict started, The Luio Chamber of Commerce, headquarted in Hong Kong, was the largest sponsor of “Karaba”, and since Beltorchika had a personal relationship with the president’s daughter Stephanie Luio, there was no reason for the former not to get a job.

But, unrelated to this, Bright could imagine that Beltorchika had most likely drifted away from the rigid world once she got involved with a man like Amuro. Amuro Ray was hailed as the ace pilot during the One Year War, but after the War, he was feared as

a proponent of Newtype thinking, and was imprisoned in house arrest. When the Titans were growing in influence, Beltorchika, not anyone else, was the one who caused the traumatized Amuro to stand up again, and this was something Bright heard from Amuro himself. “What happened to Lieutenant Amuro was a pity.” Bright gave a probing look at those eyes on the monitor again,

This insensitive line would touch upon a person’s old wounds, but Bright believed if this line would cause Beltorchika to waver, he could be certain that it was best not to trust in her abilities. He realized that he was doing something cruel as he hid his sense of guilt and looked at the other person’s face with a nonchalant look. Beltorchika herself merely gave a probing look, and then chuckled, (It’s Commander Amuro, right?), as she gave an unfettered tone.

“Ah, you’re right. Sorry.”

(You don’t have to think for my sake. We used to be deeply in love with each other, and then we broke up. I heard he died in battle during “Char’s Counterattack”, and I was depressed for a while…but his body wasn’t discovered, right?)

“Yes…”

(Isn’t him being MIA after the battle against his arch-nemesis Char a suitable ending for a romantic like him? Up till now, I sometimes feel that he should be alive, somewhere. Even if we lose the shell of the human called Amuro, I do feel that his heart has merged with space…)

Beltorchika looked like she was staring in the distance as she narrowed her eyes, and Bright felt that these words of her were not forced. *The brat who's always crying about on "White Base" had become a man who made a woman show this expression?* Bright was suddenly overcome by grief as he too looked afar, and Beltorchika chuckled, saying, (You're just like what Amuro said, always worrying.), shocking the man. Bright saw the message shown on the woman's face, and realized that his thoughts were seen through, "I admit this." and could only smile wryly as he showed what little he had in his mind.

"That's why I can talk to you like this now. Since the response is so swift, I suppose the Luio Chamber of Commerce is starting to be wary of the Vist Foundation's movements?"

It was two days ago since the moment when he first established contact with the Luio Chamber of Commerce and requested them to investigate everything involving this incident—right after Mineva Vist visited the "Ra Cailum" as an unexpected guest and the "Unicorn" pilot escaped, creating a commotion. It was impossible to think that the other party would be so quick with their response if they had not been investigating all this while. As Bright probed in, (Yeah, the Luio Chamber of Commerce and the Vist Foundation are two large organizations competing against each other, at least on Earth.) Beltorchika simply gave a direct answer.

(On the surface, the situation is that 'the rich are lazy to spend the effort fighting each other', but there are a lot of strings being pulled underneath… regarding the "Laplace Box", it seemed that

the Luio family had already known of its existence. The Vist Foundation had the " Box", so the Luio family could only try to avoid a direct confrontation—this seemed to be an unwritten rule bordering superstition in their family. Miss Stephanie has not explained this to be me clearly, but the Chamber of Commerce once had a scuffle with the Foundation in the past and took a severe defeat. This incident started because the ex-leader of the Foundation, Cardeas Vist, made his own decision to release the " Box".)

Beltorchika started to explain to Bright how everything happened, the negative rumors surrounding Cardeas' death, the current substitute leader Martha planning to reclaim the "Box", the Settlement Issues Council represented by Ronan intending to use this chance to get the "Box" and establish the Federation's authority once the Zeon Republic got dissolved, and how Neo Zeon, called the "Sleeves", had the shadow of the old Republic of Zeon behind it…

(With regards to the relation of the "Sleeves" leader, Full Frontal and the Zeon Republic, we couldn't investigate it clearly. There were rumors that the people working under the ex-prime minister Darcia were moving, but the information control here is too strict…)

"I read in a report that the era after the Wars had been starting to rise within the Republic, and the Nationalism was gradually reviving. There also appears to be movements of people supporting Neo Zeon fleets in Side 6. This is getting tough."

(Even so, the Federation is in the power struggle for the “Box”, and can’t seem to have a common goal.)

“Yeah. Martha of the Vist Foundation and Ronan of the Settlement Issues Council want to use the army as their personal property, and that “Second Coming of Char” who intends to topple the establishment…I really can’t help but feel that times are changing.”

Beltorchika made a frown with her primp and proper eyebrows, perhaps because she just heard these unexpected words from Bright. The excessive information cause Bright to feel the heaviness of his head as he leaned on the back of the chair, “Am I wrong?” and he sighed as he said.

“Leaving aside the One Year War, it has been the same for the Titans and the Zeon remnants. Whether others agreed or not, it’s true that they had their own thoughts too. The wars that were started in the past was because people had opposition against the establishment called the Federation, and where humanity stood at this point; However, there’s no such ideals now. I’m not sure what this “Box” that can topple the world is, but I can see the greed of those who want to monopolize it, that whoever gets the “Box” can gain authority. In other words, the season for politics is over, and the era of a cold world that can only be moved by self-profit and authority has come before us. That’s why this individual rule was disorderly, causing the tragedy at Dakar.”

(I do understand what you mean, but I can't accept this way of thinking. Your words seem to imply that it's alright to start wars as long as we have our own ideals.)

On hearing this direct refute, he felt that someone just poked him in the head. (I'm sorry. I'm someone who speaks too much. Amuro used to remind me of this habit I have.) Beltorchika said, but the glance she shot through the monitor showed that she had no intent of retracting her words. Bright was shocked that he was unabashed in beautifying the past and criticizing the present, and that perhaps was the proof that he was advanced in age. "No, I was insensitive in my choice of words. My wife often reproves me regarding this too." He tried to calm himself down as he was a little shocked by how outdated his personal ideals were.

"Anyway, thank you for telling me this. I can more or less plan for the future now. Please also send my regards to senior manager Stephanie too. However, it seems that it's not going to be easy repaying this favour…"

(The Luio Chamber of Commerce won't simply watch the Federation's internal strife from the sidelines, so I suppose you shouldn't be too concerned by it…but what do you intend to do?)

"This isn't easy. I want to end the fight over the "Box" as soon as possible to prevent incidents like Dakar from happening again …but it's really pointless to choose sides between the Foundation and the Settlement Issues Council. Actually, if the Vist Foundation people enter space, the "Ra Cailum" will lose its opportunity to intervene."

Once the higher-ups ordered for the people from the Foundation to be ferried to Torrington Base, the "Ra Cailum" would have to stay on Earth and defend against terrorist attacks. Most likely, this was the instruction given by Martha to the Senate Council. The only one who could overturn the current situation was Ronan Marcenas himself, but there was still no news from him . Even the unbelievably potent card, Mineva Zabi, seemed to be sent over from Ronan himself. From the current situation, it seemed that the Foundation had the Settlement Issue Council's number, and the fragile look of Ensign Riddhe proved that this was not a decoy strategy.

With the Vist Foundation sealing them all completely, Ronan's son had lost his goal in his adamant eyes. Perhaps Riddhe was the one who was bearing the most pressure when things were going in an unexpected direction. Logically, if he could relax his tense shoulders, he should be able to find a way out with his inherent intellect…

(So even the "White Base" captain that managed to break through Zeon forces with one ship has to surrender with both hands up now?)

"The situation's perilous now. It's not as simple as back then; once I got promoted to the position of a commander, Londo Bell became a hostage. To break through with a single ship is really—"

The moment he answered with a wry smile on his face, Bright felt an electric flow surge through his mind. *Break through with a single ship…*Bright repeated in his heart, and let his thoughts work

as he did not want to let go of this moment of inspiration. (Captain Bright) He was not paying attention to Beltorchika, who gave him a serious look and called him.

(What I'm going to say now has nothing to do with the Luio Foundation. Please treat it as my own rambling…last morning, there was a tramp ship on the South Pacific that broke off from its anticipated routes and broke off contact.)

Upon seeing the tense face, Bright understood that this was no trivial affair at all. He set aside his thoughts that had this flash of inspiration, "What's on it?" he asked, and Beltorchika answered, " It's a Zeon remnant mobile suit." He was already mentally prepared, but her voice caused his heart to race.

(To avoid the backlash from the Dakar incident, there was a squad that escaped to New Guinea. The ship was originally planned to head to Africa, but now it's heading south to Australia.)

Australia—the continent where Torrington Base was located. If it were yesterday morning, it would be the same moment as when this ship was ordered to change its course. (Of course, there's no real proof to be sure that this has anything to do with the movements of the "Ra Cailum".) Beltorchika said and gave a meaningful look from the monitor.

(But I'm concerned with how both sides are moving at the same time. Please be careful.)

"I understand. Does the Luio Chamber of Commerce have any business dealings with the remnants to let them escape?"

(There's no direct relation, but we can't clear this relationship.)

"Is that so…sorry for making you lose your sense of morality."

(Please don't mind. I merely muttered to myself as I don't want to see the ship Amuro once rode on get damaged.)

Beltorchika professed as she hid the tightrope-like tension under her smile. There was a sense of extremely complicated feelings swelling in Bright, ostensibly graciousness or apologetic, as he sight his sights on this new hope that appeared in front of him. He then tried to piece it with the inspiration he had before.

Beltorchika didn't mention about Mineva Zabi at all. If she and the Luio Chamber of Commerce don't know about this, it will be hard to imagine that the Zeon remnants are aiming to get Mineva back. They're targeting the "Unicorn". I will have to factor in the "Garencieres" that went missing after we lost sight of it in Dakar. If they have any intent to take the "Unicorn" back, if they were waiting to ambush the "Ra Cailum " without such fighting strength, perhaps—

"…Maybe we'll get hurt."

Bright inadvertently blurted out and looked over at the console in front of the monitor. Beltorchika however tilted her head without knowing what was going on.

"No, I won't let this "Ra Cailum" sink. We won't sink here, but …"

This will be a risky move, but if we're successful, I may be able to take the initiative over the Foundation and the Settlement Issues Council. Bright got up as he relied on the ray of light that shone into his thoughts. On the other side of the monitor, Beltorchika blinked, and her expression was like a young girl.

Part 4

"…Audrey Burne. Even if it's a pseudonym, it certainly sounds delightful. I do watch those movies too."

Martha said as she eased herself into the seat opposite. Mineva could tell from this woman's mannerism that she knew etiquette was a weapon to protect herself. During the past 2 days, Martha had already shed off, 1, 2 layers off her mask and started to show her arrogant nature, but that refined etiquette of hers still demanded equal respect from the other party. Mineva clenched the fists on her knees and turned her silent stare at the other woman. Her sense of danger were telling herself that if she did not exert strength on herself like this, she would be devoured by Martha's pace.

The officer room crewmen dressed in white attendant clothes were serving soup according to where both women were seated. As the flagship of Londo Bell, the "Ra Cailum" had a commander room with top-notch furniture inside. The 8-seater table was made of authentic oak, and the cutlery were all of top-grade branded goods. The reason why a commander room, which would

occasionally act as a social stage for special guests, existed, was because it was an important 'armament'. Whether it was the well-trained attendants or the carpet with nary a speck of dust, they certainly showed the merit of the commander or the captain. However, the commander was not in that room.

The ones in the room were only Martha, the black-clothed Foundation subordinates escorting her, and no crew member of the "Ra Cailum" other than the two attendants. The basic greetings , which were a form of etiquette, were simply formal interactions, and the atmosphere in this room was equivalent to that of an interrogation room. The fragrance of the soup served in front of Mineva had an invisible malice, torturing her. This was probably made from a retort pouch used by a high-class hotel, but her body would not be able to take it as she went on a hunger strike for 2 days. As long as she relaxed, she felt that she would fall anytime—

"Please enjoy."

Martha said, showing a smile indicating that she saw through the other party. Mineva held her breath as she excluded the nutritious looking soup from her sights.

"You've been drinking only water ever since you arrived here, haven't you? Your body won't last at this rate. Besides, your body isn't just your—"

"I have no intention of accepting anything from the enemy."

The voice that interrupted caused the attendant's hand to tremble as the grape wine was being poured. The men from the

Foundation, who were standing at the door, gave nervous looks into the room, but Martha's expression did not change at all, "How unexpected." Martha did not stop smiling as she said these words and took a sip from the wine.

"I should have explained to you regarding how we plan to deal with the "Box". We believe that you're on the same side as us, Your Highness."

"Then, why did you detain Banagher Links?"

"He did take the "Unicorn", and is suspected to be involved in a terrorist attack. And now, he intended to escape from the ship. It's to be expected that we detain him."

"Then what about Marida? She's my subordinate. If you say that you're on the same side as me, I hope that you return her to me."

Martha put the wine glass back on the table as she glanced to the door. The black Foundation subordinates nodded and opened the door. The two attendants, who were prompted to leave, went through the door, and once the subordinates closed the door, Martha raised the glass again. This room became a place where only the two of them were in, and Martha swirled the liquid that was as red as lipstick, "Even if you wish for this, Your Highness, she probably wouldn't listen." She slowly spoke up.

"Lieutenant Marida…Ple Twelve is currently working under us. This is her own will."

"Will? You forcefully made adjustments to her and dare to brazenly—"

"That's right, we made adjustments to her. Just like what Neo Zeon did in the past."

Martha removed her smile as her icy cold and sharp stare pierced into Mineva's heart together with her voice, causing the latter to be silent. She recalled the pair of blue eyes that once easily subdued the escaped Banagher and did not respond upon seeing her. That hollow expression was just like the moment when Marida was first detained on the "Garencieres". She was like a puppet with its strings snapped—"Princess Mineva, please don't act innocent here." Martha turn her lips into a smile as she said,

"We're not the ones who create that pitiful creature, but you. I just want to release her inner thoughts and give her a chance of revenge."

"Revenge…?"

"Yes, I want her to take revenge on the world that created her, the world dominated by the logic of men."

Martha raised the empty glass, and then got around the table as she walked towards Mineva. The latter resisted the urge to leave her seat as she continued to look in front.

"Princess Mineva, you're one of the victims too. The logic of men set up the conflict between the Federation and Zeon, and this logic set you upon a throne that doesn't exist. Even so, nobody's

willing to listen to you. Those men just see the “Laplace Box” dangling in front of them and lose themselves like crazy dogs.”

Martha brought her face to Mineva’s ears, and whispered, “Don ’t you find this ugly?” her voice had the fresh stench of grape wine , and the latter felt like she was ensnared by snakes as goosebumps rose on her.

“In this sense, you have the natural flair for it. Do you want to ally with me, Princess Mineva? I won’t put you in a spot, and I can assure the safety of the Zeon remnants following you.”

“Ally, with you…?”

Mineva inadvertently turned her head around and looked at the face sticking close to her shoulder. Martha looked back at the face doubting her intellect as she withdrew, “If men continue to direct, humanity will reach its doom sooner or later.” She left these words behind as she got behind Mineva.

“This planet is already in tatters…we need the sense of women to rule the world to prevent the same mistakes from happening again. There was a movement of female rights a long time ago, but that was a battle of authority using the logic of men. What I seek, however, is different. If we follow the logic and rational of nature, the ones dominating society are naturally women.”

Martha toyed with the empty glass as she put her other hand around Mineva’s shoulder. The latter felt goosebumps from the chill of the hand, and she looked down at the soup that was about to go cold.

"To put it simply, the biological model of humans is chained within the bag called the womb. Men are simply in charge of inserting their seeds, and beside that role, it can be said that they're aliens without value biology. That's why men like to boast about themselves. They boast about the causes of righteousness, their ideals, and they want to find value in this world itself, starting wars in the end. Up till now, humanity has been becoming arrogant as they found their sense of self-worth against nature, and allowed men to continue their wanton belly. It's about time to return things to how they were. In order to move the shackle of the womb into space, 10,000 lightyears away…"

"Miss Martha, do you have children?"

The interrupting voice caused Martha's fingers, resting on Mineva's shoulder, to tremble. "Two of them. why?" Upon hearing the stiff tone, Mineva felt the reason by the chill in her heart, "Are they the children you bore?" she started to ask with a personal tone.

"…What do you mean?"

"I don't understand what kind of person my mother is, and that 's because she dead before I could remember. However, there's no reason for me to remember that she's still my mother. A female as a mother, someone with a motherly nature, anyone will give off that sort of gentle presence. I can't sense that maternal presence from you."

Martha's expression immediately changed as she stumbled backwards. Mineva saw the suit that showed the other woman's

bodyline, realized that she obviously put in her utmost effort to maintain her skin so as to prevent people from realizing her age, *as expected* and secretly muttered to herself.

This woman, while acting as a clever tactician, had an immature flair on her. Her girlish ideals and grudges had corrupted her right from the base, and it felt like she lost something as she increased in age. She talked of her knowledge of humans, but she never understood people, and did not intend to understand them. Martha was a hypocrite of a reformer. Mineva stood up and looked in front, feeling that there was no need for her to be afraid. Martha wanted to maintain his footing, but could not do so, and stumbled backwards again as Mineva glared at her with her clearly hostile eyes.

"You denied the logic of men, and yet used that to conquer Marida. It's possible if you explained that it was the ruthlessness of women at work, but you're acting just like a man when you're using that excuse to rationalize your knowledge. You're not the kind of woman you say. Of course, you're not a man. You're just using the tone of a man to exercise the cruelty of a woman, a conman who uses whatever indecent weapons—"

Something grazed past Mineva's face before she could finish, and a sharp sound glided past the sky as it entered her ears. The shrill sound of the glass breaking rang from behind, and the Foundation subordinates in black charged into the room, perhaps because they realized that there was something amiss in the situation. Mineva stared at Martha, not moving at all, and the latter's hand, which threw the glass at Mineva, continued to look over.

"There's nothing at all. Move out."

Martha chastised them without moving her head, and clasped her hands that were still trembling a little. The men looked a little tentative as they looked around the room, and then retreated from it. Once the door was closed, Martha regained some of her cool, and she flicked her hair and gave a wry look as she muttered, " You got me there."Mineva however merely heaved a slight sift of relief.

"I was careless and thought that you're just a little pipsqueak. It seems that I underestimated you, and that you are really capable to talking down the pilot of the "Unicorn"."

"I underestimated you too. You do have feminine points."

With her back facing the wine glass that was shattered on the wall, Mineva expressed her true thoughts. Martha hid her wry look as she showed anger in her eyes again and snorted, "Same goes for you. I should respect that arrogant self-esteem of yours." She sighed as she said this, and tied the strands of hair covering her forehead between her fingers.

"But that self-esteem will kill. You understand? You just robbed the future off the Zeon remnants who admired you. Their only future is to coexist with the Vist Foundation. Women are supposed to play the role of protector. I suppose you aren't?"

Mineva was already prepared, but the poison arrow in the form of words still caused quite the shock. Martha probably noticed

Mineva clenching her fists as her lips, coated with a thick layer of lipstick, twisted as she sneered. “Excuse me. I’ll have to make a correction here”. She said as she took a step forward.

“It’s also a woman’s ability to use their self-esteem to kill men. Be a fine woman, and it’s best if you can turn that Banagher Links into your own fertilizer.”

Martha left these words sidelong as she walked towards the door. Mineva resisted the urge to look back and retort as she stood where she was. The door opened, and closed, and the poisonous air surrounding Martha, which filled the room, immediately vanished. What replaced it and struck Mineva was a heavy sense of fatigue.

Mineva could not exhale immediately as she looked down at the bowl of soup that turned cold. Her stomach that was growling had stopped doing so, and she, who felt only thirst, reached for the cup of water with condensed water on it. Her trembling fingers could not listen to her command, and some of the water that was poured in sputtered out. The water that drenched the tablecloth flowed down the edges of the table as it dripped.

I won’t regret it, and that’s how it is. Mineva looked at the water droplets that was dripping and convinced herself in her heart. There was a familiar voice ringing in her heart, the voice of a voice calling for her. That glimpse of the face two days ago was more mature than it was the last time she saw him. That tanned and reliable face was only looking at her as it called. He too was imprisoned somewhere on this ship, struggling alone as he bore this heavy secret. He did not rely on anyone else, and there was no

hope for him to be saved. He would continue to fight on until a certain someone he could trust tell him that 'it was enough'.

However, that would be equivalent to defeat. Even if the opponent merely wanted to revert the situation back to normal after reclaiming the "Box", Mineva would definitely not succumb to those people who took away Marida's soul. She did not want a woman like Martha to let things develop as she please. *I hope that you'll continue to hang on,* she cheered on Banagher in her heart as she recalled the words Martha said, shocked by this as a result. *It's also a woman's ability to use their self-esteem to kill men*—she was prompted by the urge not to associate herself with Martha's ego. *I was intending to watch Banagher and my Zeon people die.*

Then, what should I do? Mineva could not even make a sound as she, out of strength, put her hand on the table to support herself. She grabbed the wet tablecloth to suppress the emotion surging up her throat. The water oozed from between her fingers, and the dripping sound echoed through the commander room.

Part 5

The sound of water dripping was itching Banagher's eardrums in a regular rhythm. He looked away from the arm slightly and stared over at where the sound came from. There was the sound of new water droplets dripping from the tap at the basin, located in a corner of the officer room that was transformed into a detention room, and there was a unique echo that rang through this dim room.

"Audrey Burne…just view her as this for now. Mineva Zabi isn't here . What you see is a woman with hidden depths, so everything depends on how you want to deal with her."

The sound of the water droplets dripping resonated with Alberto's voice. Banagher lost the strength and will to close off the tap as he put his arm on his face as he laid down to rest.

"It's the same for the woman you call Marida. We can grant her the freedom, provided if ou play along or not. I won't force you any longer. You better think for yourself regarding what is the best thing to do."

Banagher thought about it before. Also, he told them that the new coordinates were pointing to space. However, the details would have to wait until Audrey was released. If they want to know the exact coordinates, they would have to return Audrey to Neo Zeon—he knew very well that this was a lopsided deal against his favor. It had been two days since Alberto said these words, and though Banagher had been threatened a few times afterwards, they had not contacted him for the last 12 hours or so. He was wondering if they were preparing to enter space, but in fact, the ship was already moving. The sunset-lit ocean surface could be seen moving from right to left on the communication panel, which captured the video feed from the external camera.

Banagher once saw something resembling a desert landscape through the gaps between the clouds the previous day. That was possibly the African continent. On that African land, he once went near the border of left and death with Zinnerman, and met Loni. *What's Loni doing now?* Banagher thought blankly. He felt that he

heard Loni's voice when he was facing against the mobile armor. Her last thoughts entered his heart, telling him to fire at the source of the grudge—

The chilling sweat permeated out, causing his body that was resting on the bed to go cold. He did not want to think about it any further. Even if he spent his effort thinking about it, he would be unable to do anything at all. No matter where this ship was going, he would be brought to space sooner or later. With Audrey being held as a hostage, he would be forced to lead the way for those searching for the "Box". He did not believe that he could remain silent forever, and he had a premonition that if he were to meet Audrey the next time, he would probably reveal everything—even if she did not wish for it, despite this being a betrayal to the wills of the many people residing in him and the thought demanding him 'to do what he felt he had to do'.

Amongst the thought processes within him, the one that he could not differentiate as either himself or others…was the outsider called Marida Cruz. Her poker face appeared in his mind together with the black "Unicorn", causing him to exert more strength on the arm resting on his eyes. Her cold eyes when she blocked his path looked like a completely different person's. He could not sense the feeling of loss within her, only a thorough hollow feeling. Cyber-Newtype? Readjustments? He did not understand. He did not want to admit that humans could be reformed like this. Humans do change, but that was different; that way of changing humans was different; that was definitely something that was not to be done to someone else.

Perhaps the human's will is to this extent. In the future, where I know that people I get involved with can betray me and abandon everything, will I being reformed gradually? How do I determine the differences between change and reform? Is there a point in differentiating them? Humans' wills are just something that can be transplanted or shed off by other people's hands. What is the meaning of using this kind of thing to differentiate between good and evil…?

The sound of the door being unlocked rang, and his thoughts that were going nowhere were interrupted. *Is it an interrogation again?* Banagher moved his slow moving head as he got up from the bed. Upon seeing the face of the man standing at the door, he made a small gasp.

Standing over there was a man in Federation officer uniform. He was probably around 40 years old…or maybe a tad younger. His black eyes, similar to his hair color had a glint in them, making him look relatively young. He had a mature look, but his clear eyes had the determination of a youth.

"I want to talk with you. May I?"

His back was straightened like a soldier, but there was a tinge of gentleness that could be heard from his voice. Banagher hardly had a proper talk with the crew on the ship after he was detained here, and he nodded as he got off the bed immediately without looking away. The man glanced outside to chase off the Foundation's guards, walked into the room, closed the door, and spoke.

"I'm Bright Noa, the captain of this ship."

The man reached his hand out as he looked around the room that was lit only with the spotlight for nighttime use. Banagher understood that the other man was worrying if there were any surveillance cameras, and gave a look with his eyes, telling the other man not to worry as he too reached his hand out. The man who called himself Bright showed a smile as his sturdy hands clasped Banagher's hand firmly.

"I'll be ashamed to admit that I still have to worry about being eavesdropped on in my own ship."

Bright sat down on the bed as he glanced at the communication panel. The light grey clouds filled the 10-inch monitor, probably because the ship had just risen in height. "I increased the speed of the ship slightly. We'll reach Sydney Bay in the afternoon tomorrow." Bright explained, but Banagher did not know what to make of these words as he merely looked at the side of the other man's face.

"We'll stop at a place called Torrington Base, and the role of the "Ra Cailum" will end there. You'll most probably end up going to space with those Foundation people."

"I'm not going to space on this ship?"

"Our relationship with the Foundation isn't good. They won't let us search for the treasure with them."

Bright shrugged as he said simply. His relaxed attitude would make one suspect if this was a trap to lower Banagher's guard, but the latter did not feel this deliberate action from the other man's bitter smile. Also, there certainly was a relaxing atmosphere inside the room. Banagher exhaled a little and sat on the chair.

"Before this, there's something I want to ask you. You've been working with Neo Zeon after arriving on Earth, and yet you came out on your own during the Dakar incident and fought that mobile armor with Ensign Riddhe. Why is that?"

"Why…because I felt I had to stop it."

"Did you escape from that disguised trading ship "Garencieres" ?"

"It's not right to say that I actually escaped from it. I felt that they deliberately sent me out. Even the captain of the "Garencieres " can't accept that kind of operation."

Banagher expressed his doubts in the form of words simply as he probed his face that still had the bruise from the punch. He heard that there was no news of the "Garencieres" after Dakar. *If he knows that Audrey and Marida are here, Zinnerman will—* Banagher suddenly had this thought and felt that it was useless to think deeper into this as he shook off that fierce-looking bearded face from his mouth. Bright gave an observing look silently, breathed out from his nose, "That's right. It certainly seems that the " Garencieres" actions point to this." he said as he clasped his hands.

"That means that you weren't treated like a prisoner there, and you had the freedom to act on whatever you thought, right?"

"That's…right. I didn't feel that they were enemies like what the Federation said."

"Why's that?"

"I'm not a soldier…so I'm not used to determining who's my friend or enemy. The atmosphere on that ship gave me the feeling that there's no need for that. I didn't feel the atmosphere of the " Sleeves" I felt in "Palau", at least…I could feel enemy intent back instantly. I think it's because of this that I could stay on the " Garencieres"."

"In other words, they made you feel that you could talk with them?"

"Yes." Banahger answered as he felt that Bright was trying to get information on something as he turned his surprised look on the other man. After a short pause, Bright looked like he made some sort of decision as he got up. "I understand. Thank you." He said as he gave an unfettered smile.

"You're so young, but your observation and expressive skills are rather impressive. I suppose your parents taught you very well ."

Banagher knew that this was merely a social formality, but these words still felt heavy to him, who was once described as 'a Cyber-Newtype created by Cardeas. Once he saw Banagher lower

his head, Bright seemed to realize that he touched on something he should not have mentioned, “Sorry for talking too much here”, he quipped, and walked past the boy. Banagher watched the other man head straight for the door, “Please wait!”, and hurriedly got up from the chair.

“If you’re the captain, can you let me meet Audrey…Princess Mineva?”

“Unfortunately, my power alone can’t help you. In reality, I had to put in quite the effort just to get to talk to you.”

The face of the man who answered apologetically without asking for the reason caused Banagher’s heart to ache. “Is that so…” the boy slumped back onto the bed again.

Those pair of emerald eyes suddenly appeared in his eyes in “Industrial 7”. Once he tried to sort out his past experiences, Banagher felt an inexplicable sense of unfamiliarity with her again. He wanted to meet her; he wanted to see those eyes looking at him again in a place where he hoped no one could disturb them. The origin that sent him to this moment, those eyes may probably allow him to swallow the change and reform within him, and revert him to his initial emotional state—Banagher clasped his hands together and looked over at the dim floor. “Don’t give up.” However, Bright said.

“Your eyes have strength, a look of determination that can turn difficulty into nutrients, just like the generation of pilots who used to pilot “Gundams”. As long as you don’t give up, the opportunity will definitely come.”

This was not a reasoning based on perspective alone as Bright's voice sounded like he had experience with this. Banagher looked back at the contemplating face, immediately looked down, "No…I don't have that power." he eked out this voice as he murmured.

"Everything was just out of coincidence. I got onto the "Unicorn ", I ended up waiting here…all because of coincidence. If it were someone with the power, he'll definitely handle it better. He'll be active enough to lose himself and help others, while I…"

I can't even save myself, let alone Audrey or Marida. If you're trying to say that I'm a Cyber-Newtype, this would be too much of a joke. Banagher bit his lips hard as he resisted the urge to let his emotions explode and closed his eyes. After a short moment of silence, Bright's hand was placed upon his shoulder lightly, "The " Gundam" pilots in the past were all like this too." This calm and steady voice caused Banagher's eardrums to resonate.

"It was already difficult for them to live as the situations continued to change drastically…whether or not they exist, the overall situation would not change. Ultimately, an individual being does not have the power to save the world."

The self-loathing expression could be seen in Bright's eyes as he narrowed them unhappily. He did not look at Banagher, who lifted his face to look back, and suppressed some sort of emotion as he turned towards the door.

"However, some people were saved because of their existence. Even if their names aren't widely famous, there are some incidents that will remain in the world, and this is the truth. Individually,

we are helpless, but individual wills united together can also drag the world from the dark abyss. I suppose the symbolism of the " Gundam" is definitely about that kind of power. When the world's conflicts reach its climax, they will appear from somewhere and link people together, whether they are ally or foe…the basis of that will always be the power of humanity. This is the power of the will , to face the still world while still trying to use their hearts to interact with people. Don't be crushed by the situation. If you're a "Gundam" pilot too…a Newtype, you should summon your courage and force back the thoughts of despair."

Bright looked back and showed an earnest look for a fleeting moment, and before Banagher could ask back, he immediately walked off and opened the door. Banagher watched the back disappear through the door without looking back and vanished on the other side of the door; and looked down at his hands lit by the reflected light of the monitor.

Those were weak hands that could not do anything. No matter what kind of people the past generations of "Gundam" pilots were , they were definitely no different. They definitely faced these kinds of situations when they used their powerless hands to touch others, to support others, to kill others occasionally, and kept the one and only thing that could make the decisions for them—the heart. No matter what kind of cruel reality they witnessed, they could continue on by saying, "Even so".

Banagher clenched his hands, warmed by a heat sensation, and looked at the monitor of the communication panel. He saw the white patch of clouds that expanded beyond the horizon, and nothing more. The white cloud vapors covered everywhere, and

he could not tell where they were…but that would not continue forever. If he kept on running, he would be able to escape sooner or later. *I can't give up, I have to look at the situation clearly*—Banagher made this decision. *That's because, the chance to break through will definitely fall onto me.*

Even if it's merely an amicable feeling, even if it's knowledge others tell me that cause me to feel this way, the heat sensation from these hands is definitely from within me. Banagher felt that it was okay to leave it like this for now as he stared at the white space outside. The mist that flashed by and disappeared paused, and he saw the orange sunlight overlap upon the clouds.

Part 6

For a short fleeting moment, the sun shone in on the white bright window in a burning manner, but immediately disappeared after the clouds covered it again.

The clouds were thicker than expected. If the weather report was correct, the clouds here would flow into Sydney Bay the next time. The skies above Torrington Base would likely be overcast. *Is this good or bad for the operation*—Zinnerman thought carelessly, concluded that they would know tomorrow, "How's the situation? " and then asked the Flaste on the navigation seat. "No deviation in course." The answer rang through the cramped bridge of the " Garencieres".

The "Ra Cailum" is definitely headed for Torrington Base. Local time of the estimated arrival time is 1330, no change at all."

The Minovsky Radar caught sight of the "Ra Cailum" light spot, and the reaction ring showed it heading from above the Indian Ocean to the Sunda Islands. The vague ring had a radius of 1000km, but there was definitely a ship indicated by the source of the Minovsky Particles in the circle, and it was not exceptionally difficult to deduce where the ship was headed. They had been eavesdropping on the satellite feeds from the "Ra Cailum" and the Federation Senate Council for 4 days, and Zinnerman again felt that the time was ripe as he turned to look beside the captain's seat . Two men dressed in old Republic army fatigues were leaning at the wall not far behind.

They were Lieutenant Commander Yohem Kirks and Lieutenant Kandle, two men discovered in the forests of the New Guinea region. They were brought up onto the ship together with their beloved machines, and though it had been two days, both men still seemed to be unused to the change in situation as they showed inexplicable looks at the bridge like they were kidnapped by aliens. Kirks himself should be around 50 years old, but Kandle was probably in his 30s. Both men were dropped down from the Zeon Republic to Earth 17 years ago, and managed to live on after defeat after defeat in battle. *It's like pus surging out after the war. What's their view of us here?* Zinnerman did not think too deeply into this and handed the wireless communicator microphone to Kirks.

"This can call in your comrades by processing information into codes. Do you want to try calling them out, commander?"

Upon hearing that sarcastic greeting, Kirks rolled his eyes and glared over at Zinnerman, "Are you really going to attack?" he growled, but Zinnerman merely shrugged in response.

"We have 8 outdated mobile suits here. Combining that with the machines you have, there's still less than a dozen. The machines on that Federation ship are all brand new, right?"

"That seems to be the case."

"And there are guards at the base."

"Most likely."

"Even if I'm being courteous here, this really isn't smart. It'll be wiser to sell you off to the Federation and ask them to spare us."

Kirks' stiff voice caused Kandle, standing beside him, to turn his nervous stare around the bridge. Zinnerman spotted Flaste and Alec turning their heads slightly too as he answered, "You'll make the call, commander."

"You can return back if you want to. We'll send you over if there's a place willing to keep you. I don't hate the view of preserving ourselves since I take care of my subordinates this way, but…"

Zinnerman glanced aside at Kirks' wavering stare, and looked right back at him, saying, "In that case, why are we still playing the Zeon card? If we want to be smart about this, there are still many ways to go about doing this, and yet we willing let ourselves

become terrorists for hire…I really don't know. This is really hard to understand."

Zinnerman turned around and kept back the microphone dangling in the air, but before he could put it back onto the console , Kirks acted faster as he snatched it away and gave a cursing look at the other man. *That's good. In terms of not knowing how to live smartly, I'm no different from Kirks.* Zinnerman did not need to affirm the thoughts they had as he heard Kirks' voice through the microphone.

"This is the commander informing all Shinbu base members. With regards to the 1248 command issued yesterday, we'll take the planned action. The planned objectives are as follows. 1, capture the Federation mobile suit called the "Unicorn", 2, ensure the safety of the "Unicorn" pilot, and 3, once 1 and 2 are complete, ensure that we have an escape route…"

Part 7

(As we all know, our forces aren't sufficient. Also, this operation isn't permitted by the Neo Zeon fleet itself. This action is initiated by Captain Zinnerman and all the volunteers on the "Garencieres" forces. Thus, everyone has the right to refuse to take part in this operation. We originally planned to abandon our base and scatter our remaining forces to different places. I dare say that up till now, even if the "Sleeves" requested us, we do not have the duty to follow.)

This voice was not codified within the "Garencieres", and what reached the crew's ears was the instant moment the voice entered

the speakers. The men working at the mobile suit deck paused the work they had for the time being and listened to this broadcast attentively.

On the lower deck of the aft, the 2 “Geara Zulus” that originally belonged to the “Garencieres” and the only “Zee Zulu” recovered from the Dakar operation located within. To all the crew members, who had been involved in every single incident ever since the “ Industrial 7” incident, they were already mentally prepared with regards to the operation they were about to initiate next. They pricked their ears to listen to the broadcast as they continued to maintain the machines that were worn out due to the continuous battles. However, there was a different situation in the upper deck of the ship’s bow.

The upper deck that had the “Unicorn” up till a few days ago now had Kirks’ “Zaku I sniper-type” and Kandle’s “Zaku Cannon ”, fastened in the hangar, facing back to back. The ones in charge of maintaining them were the 10 soldiers from the Shinbu base, and they stopped all that they were doing as they earnestly listened in on what their base commander had to say.

They were planning to abandon the base and start what was deemed a new life, but the chances of revival suddenly descended upon time before the moment they embarked on the future full of uncertainties—no matter the outcome, they believed that this would be Zeon’s last battle on Earth. They wanted to forget everything and bury their heads, but they had spent far too long of a time living on Earth. Some were looking at the photos of their

wives left on their homelands, some recalled the faces of the family members they gained on Earth, and the solemn time rained upon the deck as they determined where they should go.

(However, the new enemy mobile suit in the operative is said to have the secret information regarding a “Laplace Box”. It has the information that can topple the Federation, and not only the Federation, but all forces, are tracking down its location. These words may seem impossible to believe, but I want to make a bet on it. I believe that this operation can allow us to go off with a bang, and also give a final offering from us to Zeon.)

2,000km away from the “Garencieres”, the trading ship “ Evergreen” was moving down the Southeast Australian coast as it heard this announcement. This ship that was 200m in length and had a capacity of 5000 tons, was a company on paper, set up by the Luio Chamber of Commerce, a normal trading ship used for transporting industrial goods. However, the one steering it at this point were the people that escaped from the Shinbu base. The captain converted the received codes through a translator and broadcasted Kirks’ voice through the speakers on the ship. The pilots and mechanics of the Shinbu squad were on the cargo deck below the open-air deck, listening in. Two Dom-types were lying in a corner of this dim cargo deck, and there were a lot of goods piled up over these machines, covering their massive frames. One of the Dom-types was a mass production suit in the later era, the “ Dwadge”, while the other was a “Dom Tropen” modified for hot terrain use. The “Dwadge” was upgraded to with 3rd generation

specifications, but the “Dom Tropen” was a single unit built without an all-view monitor. Thus, the pilot could only listen in on Kirks’ voice in that narrow cocpit.

It was the same for the “Zaku Mariner” right below the “ Evergreen” as it moved at a depth of 30m. This machine was modified for amphibious use, and had an all-view monitor installed within the cockpit, but the sight of the large engine propulsion moving the water still looked rather crude. The “Zaku Mariner” pilot too heard Kirks’ voice from the cable extended from the bottom of the “Evergreen”. Two “Capules” amphibious units were right behind, connected by cables as they moved under the sea with lights on their heads.

The limbs of the “Capules” were all kept within its round body when diving, looking no different from a ball. Overall, it really did not look like a mobile suit. The “Capules” pilots were considered youngsters amongst the Shinbu’s regiment that was primarily comprised of old soldiers from the One Year War, who ended up left on Earth after the first Neo Zeon war. Even so, it had been 8 years since they were deemed as defeated soldiers. They once managed to escape from the space base “Axis” successfully and join the rising Neo Zeon, but ended up with the ironic fate as the remnant forces from the One Year War—they went through 8 years, and even the term turbulent would be an empty way of describing them. Their expressions were similarly tense as they listened in on the commander’s voice. What kind of result would happen from this visit? The heavy time continued in this pitch black darkness, as even their fates were still undetermined.

(I hope that everyone can put their hands on their chests and ask this question. Why is it that we never gave up on being Zeon soldiers? We missed out on chances to start something many times , and on one hand, we're even despised as mercenary terrorists. Even so, we continued to be Zeon soldiers. What is the meaning in this? What others view about us isn't the problem; the answer lies within our own hearts. We choose to deny or affirm our future lives. Now, what do we want to do? I hope everyone understands that this choice can decide our past and future.)

There was a twin-engine transport craft flying above Australia, 1000km west of the "Evergreen", on the way from Tanzania in Africa as it ferried processed fish. However, half the storage space were not frozen food, as they were several supplies they exchanged in New Guinea—the 20m humanoid machine—this large body nearly exceeded the payload as it laid down in a frustrated-like manner.

The installed missile pods were protruding out on the shoulder, and the mono-eyed flat head of the "Galluss-K" looked to be embedded into the body itself. During the first Neo Zeon War, The "Galluss K" was once used as an elite troop for the invasion on Earth, and was sent onto the land from the space asteroid "Axis". Its arms had a mechanism to allow it to punch, and had many fixed armaments, and most notably, the K-type left shoulder had an additional beam cannon with a long barrel. The J-type's finger launcher machine guns were removed, but the recoilless cannon

nicknamed the Giant Bass still had quite the firepower. The machine was designed to be able to deal with all sorts of situations, and it could handle close-ranged combat to long-ranged combat.

This was the latest second generation mobile suit in the Shinbu squad, but it had been a while since the resupplies were done, and after one use, it would be hard to assure that it would be fine during the next sortie. The pilot and the mechanics assigned to it were focused on the final inspections. To them, the option of starting over in a place willing to accept them had already disappeared from their hearts.

(It's good to abandon the past and leave in a new future. I feel that it's something that can only be done with courage. However, I don't want to deny my past. If the past was meaningless, I want to end this meaningless life. This is my own thinking, and you don't have to accompany me. I hope that you can make the best choice for yourself. This incompetent commander can only send you these final words. No matter what path you take, I still want to earnestly thank everyone who had been following me. Sieg Zeon… that's all.)

Part 8

The ship descended in height, and after the final cloud became mist and floated above them, the surface of the Sydney Bay suddenly appeared in their eyes.

They descended from 800m in height and continued to descend. As the ship had already slowed down to its original speed, one would be fine even if they were to appear on the open deck.

Riddhe waited for the immigration surveillance to deploy as he came to the open deck together with the inspector on standby. The bridge back made it possible to shelter him from the wind, but the winds blowing upon his face was still very cold. The Tri-Stars zipped up their flight jumpers from their chests as they too accompanied him, and like tourists who were visiting without thinking, felt suspicious about this unexpected cold as they looked down at the Sydney Bay below them. In fact, it seemed that they did not think about how the seasons would be different in the South as compared to the North, and thought that it was merely a difference between the climates. The day was May 6, and it was in mid-autumn.

Basically, the reason why they felt cold was not simply because of the temperatures. Riddhe looked past the nozzles of the main thrusters protruding right below his eyes as he stared down at the land that was on the distance horizon. The tea-brown color that appeared faintly in the cloudy day looked like the shadow of an island when looking from the ocean. However, what was surprising was that there was a curve expanded to both left and right side, creating a thing veil on both left and right sides of the horizon as well. “Hey, there’s really a round hole there.” Watts leaned his body out from the handrails as he said this with a rather pale expression, in stark contrast from the usual teasing tone.

“Is this the place where the colony dropped?”

“800km diameter, said to be one-sixteenth the size of the entire Australian continent; well, an entire area of land was blown up from the old Sydney to the inland…”

Daryl answered beside them as he tensed up his slightly tanned Latin face. Riddhe felt the cold air remain in his chest as he turned his sights to the shadows of the land. Right, this place was not the ocean in the place. As the landscape around the place had seemingly indicated the place, the "Ra Cailum" had approached the skies above the Australian continent. 17 years ago, the "Island Iffish" space colony was dropped upon this place, causing Sydney to be dug up from the continent together with the state of New South Wales, and formed a huge crater in the southwestern side of the Australian continent. A part of the circumference overlapped with the coast in the past, and though it was directly connected to the Southern Pacific, the circle that was blown up inland looked more like a lake than a port. It was impossible to imagine that there was originally land on this place, the largest lake in the world ever since the world was born—and people stupefied over this scar of devastation instead of seeing it as a spectacular scene. But either way, this was too concealed to be considered a sea, and too open to be considered a lake; a certainty to confuse an observer 's sense of geography. It was a natural scene, but it could not fit in with nature, and could be considered a distorted space.

"But what happened to the land that was originally here? Is it blown up into space or something?"

It seemed that there were changes on the crust, and some parts were buried in the sea, while the majority was blown up into the atmosphere and still remains as dust in the skies. That's why the horizon looks so blurry. It was said that the horizon could be seen very clearly when the weather was fine before that colony dropped onto Earth."

"Such a large mass of land got blown up as dust floating in the air…" Watts retracted his upper body poking out from the handrail and cringed his shoulders. "I really don't understand . those guys on Earth really don't want to let go of this world."

This line indicated the thoughts of Spacenoids, and Riddhe felt that it was a little unexpected as he turned his head around. Watts continued to look down at the sea surface at his feet without moving, and Nigel, who was standing not too far away, glanced over. His usual unconcerned expression was still hiding an intent to observe in the eyes. Riddhe found himself uneasy as per usual and started looking for a place he could rest his eyes on at a place closer in. he found several objects protruding from the brown wasteland devoid of greenery.

That was most likely the debris of the colony. In the past, the coast of Sydney was blown off with a range reaching hundreds of kilometers, and the burnt black debris of the colony was still scattered upon the landscape like a tombstone. Riddhe once heard that the reason why this place was never replaced was because the crust had not stopped changing, and there was difficulty removing the debris scattered around. Some of the colony debris were several hundred meters in height, and such exceptionally large rubbish was something no large construct on Earth could compare to. If there was a need to talk about its one worth, it would be that this field of rubbish could be used as a modern obstacle course for mobile suit piloting training. One could certainly praise the Federation army for having quite the foresight to keep Torrington Base after the war, whether it was for the sake of obscurity, or that the land it was on could not be used for any other purposes. Perhaps it was because it set up as an Achilles heel, as its

geography meant that it was isolated, that it was once attacked by Zeon remnant forces soon after the war, and was once used as a nuclear weapon storage site, something that was forbidden in the Antarctica Treaty. However, the media attention on it had become a thing of the past, and this base, which was treated as a nearly forgotten shanty until recently, could only be described as a remote place.

The base should be set up at less than 20km away from the coast , but they could not see any signs of it from the ship. There was nothing moving on the land that was shrouded under the clouds, and one would certainly mistake it for a barren land on Mars as it extended beyond the horizon in front of everyone. “There’s nothing here.” Watts said, and Riddhe had no disagreement about that as he merely stared at the continent that expanded beyond unwittingly. The clouds that were roaming down low, right above his head, were thick and heavy, seemingly lighting up a fire in his gloomy emotion.

“I suppose we’ve arrived on land now, and we can only think wildly in the base’s rest room at most. What do the people in Torrington normally do everyday?”

“Most likely, I think they’ll just chill out and enjoy nature. I head that the sunset at Sydney Bay is quite the unforgettable sight. ”

“How boring…we’re going to continue hunting Zeon remnants after we let those Foundation people off at the base? I’ll really bore to death if I can’t find a place to spend the time. Besides, even if we don’t talk about it, the air in the ship has been really stale.”

Watts said as he gave a reproaching look at Riddhe, who had been getting used to this for the past few years. The latter decided to ignore the former's stare, "What I'm concerned is why they chose this place." And looked over at Nigel who raised the question.

"It seems that those people from the Foundation are intending to switch over to a space shuttle, but Torrington Base doesn't have any Mass Driver launch facilities. How do they intend to launch into space?"

Nigel did not respond to Riddhe's stare as he said that with an unconcerned look. "Maybe they'll probably use an equipped booster to launch into space?" Daryl answered with a bored tone.

"Torrington is really a backwater region, so even if the "Ra Cailum" is docked there, it won't be too conspicuous. It sure seems like an idea those people with ulterior motives will have."

"Maybe, but they're going to head into space with 2 "Unicorns" on it too. I don't think the Torrington Base had that kind of large space shuttle, and it's not easy to get one either. Maybe there's another way."

"Another way?" Watts asked, and Nigel pointed his chin silently into the sky. Riddhe followed Daryl and Watts' stare as he looked up and spotted two machines flying between the clouds.

The soft sound of the engines became louder, and the silhouettes of the two disc-shaped machines were gradually closing in. The lifting bodies of the two machines glided past,

leaving beside a rotor sound right above the “Ra Cailum” as it disappeared into the clouds. “What’s that? Some Base Jabber?” Watts reached out his short neck hard as he watched the machines leave and muttered, while Nigel answered, “No.” as he stopped looking for the machines in the sky.

“That’s a transformable mobile suit. I think it’s a new elite machine of the Federation army, called the “Anksha”. Read through the data before.”

“Ah, the next generation machines following the Asshimar-type ? I heard that it could transport mobile suits in its transformed form.”

Daryl said. Riddhe himself recognized the “Asshimar”; it was a transformable mobile suit type with a unique shape, and was assigned to important points on Earth 10 years ago. Once its round head and arms were retracted in, the upper body of that mobile suit would show a disc shape, like an illusion. He recalled how shocked he was when he saw it on the news for the first time. To the Federation after the war, the “Asshimar” was a machine that hardly had the chance to operate effectively under gravitational conditions, but that was still not the driving force behind Riddhe’s willing to join the air force. To a plane hobbyist, this round-disc flying mode was complete unorthodox and simply ridiculous.

The “Anksha” seemed to be the successor, and the legs below the disc were made to be more aerodynamic in shape, and the sides of the lifting body seemed to have two long barrels of beam launchers. Riddhe was not very certain, but he could see a platform used to ferry a mobile suit on top of it. “Torrington Base

has that kind of thing?" Watts asked, and he and Riddhe looked over at Nigel. If this were the case, he would have to change his view on Torrington Base. "Who knows?" Nigel answered as he looked up at the sky shrouded in grey clouds.

"Most possibly…"

The wind blew by as it swayed his hair, and his eyes were hinting at other possibilities as he looked into the sky. Riddhe frowned and looked over at Nigel's face that seemed to be hiding something.

Part 9

In terms of outcome, there was no need for Riddhe to correct his opinion on the Torrington Base. The local time was 1330, and the base took in the "Ra Cailum" that was expected to dock in. it was a place of paved concrete in a corner of the wilderness.

A desolate mountain range—naturally, these mountains did not originally exist. They were the rocks left behind from the impact—the base 2km wide was fenced up with the mountains at the backdrop, and the headquarters, barracks and hangars, these impersonal buildings were everywhere within this place. The garrison mobile suits in the hangar comprised of the old machines from the initial 3rd generation machines, but there was no sight of the latest "Anks"a" mobile suits. There was a little war memorial in the base, filled with the mobile suits' debris that were exploded and burnt, but this was most probably the result of haggling over the expenses for the asphalt. The base did not look like it came to life, even with the flagship of the Londo Bell docked in here out of

a sudden, but even when looking from afar, the operatives that were obviously demoted looked emotionally drained. It seemed that the barren sight at the end of the world was overlapped with the gloomy day as even the music from the welcoming band seemed melancholic.

The “Ra Cailum” turned the cooling plate at the bottom of the ship 90 degrees inwards and landed on the temporary dock located at the western end of the base. There were countless landing pads on the docking ground, bearing the weight of the 500m long ship equally. However, though it was called a temporary dock, there was not a single wall around. The “Ra Cailum” was sitting in a corner of the base undefended, but there was no need to worry about it being spotted by anyone in this empty wasteland. Once the landing was done, Riddhe, Nigel and company got down to the mobile suit deck. The entire ship was to be on guard until the “Unicorn” and the “Banshee” were moved. Riddhe, who was still excluded from the squad, had to check the heavy repairs done to the “Delta Plus”.

This stop had to remain low profile, so all ceremonies of having soldiers lineup or the base commander invite them were omitted, but the inside of the ship was still in a frantic mess as the two mobile suits were moved out. The deck crewmen were all running around without rest, either packaging the spare parts of the “ Banshee” or coordinating the large trailer moving the “Unicorn”. The shutter leading to the deck at the back were all opened, and even as the air outside was flowing into the mobile suit deck, Riddhe continued his own work. “We came all the way here, and they still want us to remain on standby? There has to be a limit to how cautious we can be.” Watts once complained, but his view

would definitely change if he had known that Mineva Zabi was on this ship. Either way, it was a good thing for Riddhe now that he had a job he could focus on. He would not have to worry about any other thing during this time, and he would not have to curse himself for being unable to do anything or feel out of place for being unable to vent his frustrations.

Even till this point, he had not established contact with his father, and though he had looked for Captain Bright, the situation had not improve, and Mineva would definitely be taken to space with the people of the Vist Foundation. He spotted the large Medea-type transport carriers on the runway outside, and wondered, *how are they intending to head into space?* The white frame of the "Unicorn" was lifted by the two "Jestas" and laid down horizontally on the trailer, and as he glanced aside at this, Riddhe blankly let his mind thing. Unlike the "Banshee" that was moving into the "Medea" on its own, the "Unicorn" was dragged over by the trailer, and the reason for this was due to the only pilot , Banagher, refusing to work with the Vist Foundation.

That's his style alright…he thought, but felt Alberto's words appear in his mind again, and bit his lips in the cockpit alone. His rational side was telling himself that there was no reason for him to feel angry, but he could not understand why he felt cheated, and this goosebump he could not leave alone continued to swirl in his heart.

That guy gave that ordinary look like he simply got involved in this—no, there was already an abnormal feel about him right from the beginning. If he really has the Vist bloodline, I can only describe my two battles alongside him as ironic. He's supposed to belong to the other side,

but I got fooled by him saying 'you're a man of your word', and ended up knowing the fate of my cursed family. I'm like a clown performing here.

Is this the curse of the "Box" at work too? Riddhe ended up thinking back about the "Box" again, and just when he wanted to shake off this thought from his mind and gather his focus on the inspection, a familiar chestnut-colored hair appeared in the corner of his sights and he felt his heart, which had been beating loudly up till this point, suddenly went silent.

She, with that natural chestnut-colored hair on her, was flanked by the surrounding Vist subordinates in black suits, and was about to get onto the electric car parked at the deck. She appeared on a window of the all-view monitor that was fully switched on during this system check, and her back was clearly shown on it, and Riddhe's heart, which stopped once, started to beat wildly. He snuggled out of the cockpit like he was trying to leap out from it, and jumped onto the gondola parked beside the hatch. "AUDREY! " he immediately pressed the button to move the gondola down. " What now!?" Sergeant Hanna's voice rang from before, but Riddhe got down to the deck and yelled, "IT'S ME, AUDREY!" as he leapt off the gondola.

Mineva's eyes widened as she looked back, and she wanted to break away from the ranks, only to be restrained by the subordinates in black suits. Riddhe however did not care about Martha's piercing stare as she walked in front as he continued to dash down the mobile suit deck. Mineva could be seen occasionally through the gaps between the subordinates as they

waited for the car to pass by, and just when RIddhe was about to see her face, “How troublesome”, Alberto said as he got in front of them.

“I should have told you that you’re not to see her, Ensign Riddhe.”

Alberto’s round face looked hideous, and the pilot of the “Banshee ” appeared behind him. Her face under the black helmet looked like a watchdog that would leap at all criminals on her master’s command. Riddhe stopped in his tracks, watched Mineva get accosted away from beyond Alberto’s shoulders, and let out a restrained voice as he said,

“Just let me talk to her for a moment.”

“This is my issue with her. You don’t have the right to stop—”

“We DO have the right to stop you. I should have said before that we have to protect Her Highness Mineva.”

“You dare to say protect when you’re using her as a hostage!? Handle your family inheritance issues in the family! She shouldn’t be involved in such vulgar stuff!”

“If that’s the case, I do feel that it’s more vulgar of a Federation soldier to have a crush on her.”

Upon seeing the fat face sneer, an enraged Riddhe unwittingly walked forward. “Ensign Riddhe…!” Mineva, who was behind the

"Banshee" pilot blocking him, was about to be carried up the electric car. *You're the only one I'll definitely protect. That's what I promise. I suppressed my inner heart and came here just to protect you, but I can't do anything. We won't be able to meet again*—this premonition caused his gut to sink, "AUDREY!" and he yelled out without a care for anything else in the world as he merely thought of pushing aside this pilot in front of him and charge right at the electric car. The pilot quickly dodged, reached her arm to grab his arm from the side, and pulled him towards her by using the momentum of the charge. Surprisingly, Riddhe's legs left the floor easily, and he spun half a round in the air as he landed on the ground.

The tall ceiling of the mobile suit deck appeared in front of Riddhe's eyes, and the face of the black-suited pilot did not twitch as it appeared in front of him. The electric car door was slammed shut, and the sound of the engine grazed by as the car drove off. Riddhe did not have the time to feel pain, and his sense of rationality was immediately broken as he got up and grabbed the pilot.

"You puppet…!"

I won't show mercy even if you're a woman, Riddhe decided as he immediately reached his arm out at the pilot's chest, but the pilot was faster as she grabbed Riddhe forcefully on the throat. Riddhe grabbed that springy hand and intended to pull it away, but he spotted some emotion flash by the bottom of the pilot's eyes.

There was a dull light deep within that eyes that were reminiscent of hollows, and the azure blue eyes widened before

she stopped moving. The strength of the hand grabbing onto the throat suddenly weakened, and Riddhe forcefully shook it off intently. The pilot backtracked due to the force of the release, and she showed a pained expression as she put her hands on the helmet covering her head. A certain emotion flashed through the bottom of her void eyes, and her eyes which were then filled with life immediately closed up.

"What is it? Is your head starting to hurt again!?"

Alberto turned pale as he pushed aside the flabbergasted Riddhe and went to the pilot. The pilot pushed the hands away and reached her hands for the handrail of the trailer, only to collapse onto the floor. Her hand, pressing onto her head, was tensed up, and her trembling fingers were pressing into her helmet as she ostensibly tried to rip it out—no, she looked like she was trying to squash the skullcap together with it and rip out the brains inside.

"Call Bentner in, quick."

On hearing Alberto's restrained voice, the subordinates hurriedly turned around and left. Riddhe did not understand what was going on, and originally intended to look at the pilot's face as she knelt down. "DON'T APPROACH HER!" Alberto yelled with spite and furor, shocking Riddhe enough to stop him in his tracks.

"It's because you did too many excessive things that things ended up like this. That's why I said not to let her take the same ship…!"

Alberto ignored the expressions on the subordinates' faces as he showed his true emotions and glared defiantly at Riddhe. He then knelt down and got behind the pilot. "Excessive things, you say…? " Riddhe answered, but Alberto did not care about this response as he was only concerned with the pilot, and spoke, "Oi, hang in there. I'll tell someone to move the "Banshee" there. Head there to rest." Riddhe took a step back from the place, and looked over at the shutter leading to the aft of the ship. The electric car ferrying Mineva would head through the mobile suit deck in the ship, exit the landing deck on the aft, and head down onto ground. He wondered if there was any way he could catch up, and looked around the mobile suit deck, only to hear a vague cough-like hoarse voice enter his ears.

"The enemy's, coming…"

He could barely hear these words, and Alberto inadvertently turned to look at the pilot, who shook off the arm on her shoulder as she got on her trembling legs and turned her unsteady eyes at a certain spot.

"This feeling, master…?"

She muttered, and her eyes showed anxiety as there was a certain will rising up from the dark hollow to the surface of her eyes gradually—those were the eyes of a human. Riddhe followed the eyes that were suddenly full of life and stared at the pilot's face . "Wrong, I'm your master." Alberto immediately said as he got up , his pudgy back blocking Riddhe's sight.

"I'm your guardian, I'm the only one who can protect and support you. Repeat this with me, the "Gundam" is the enemy—"

Alberto grabbed the pilot's shoulders and looked right into her eyes. She turned her eyes, perplexed, and was attracted to his eyes as she repeated, "The "Gundam"…is the enemy". Her eyes lost all glow, and Riddhe, who did not understand the situation, suddenly felt that this situation simply felt weird as he backed away. At this moment, the alarm rang without warning, causing him to tense up.

The red alarm set on the wall flashed, and everyone working on the mobile suit deck immediately stopped. Riddhe exchanged looks with Alberto, felt a sense of discomfort within him, and was driven by it to respond as he dashed without waiting for the bright to broadcast the report.

He darted past the work vehicles transporting the materials and sprinted towards the "Delta Plus" on the hangar. He was not sure why this was happening, but after witnessing the abnormality of the "Banshee" pilot, he understood that something abnormal was about to begin.

Part 10

The coastline of Sydney was 4000km in length, but there was only one proper harbor. That place was a military port set up to accommodate the movement of the goods into Torrington base, and there were no coastline embankments or any wharfs other than that particular stretch of long coastline, and the area extended beyond the coast was the rock formation created by the waves and

the wind pressing. The coast had become an empty wasteland, and the only ones moving to and fro the coast were the fish trawlers. The trading ships and so however were used to ignoring the port on this coastline, and would use the other existing ports. Naturally , the SOSUS system that was basically the radar network on the sea would not reach beyond the wide new coastline, but set around the military port.

The current time was 1408, and three mobile suits landed on the coast, approximately 30km away Torrington base was. The AMX-109 “Capule” used their cornice arms to puncture the weird lava-like object, let the hand manipulators with 5 claws stab into the crust, let its ball-shaped body look upwards, and let its chest armor open from right to left.

The 8 missile launchers hidden inside were exposed, and light grey smoke trails covered its large body as the swarm of missiles fired out in unison, rising diagonally. Another “Capule” fired its missiles as well. A RMS-192M “Zaku Mariner” raised its Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) weapon on its hand and fired. 18 smoke trails drew an arc and charged right at Torrington base.

The sounds of the missiles flying over crossed the skies above the base’s fences and bombarded the combined industrial facilities at the south. The low round cylindrical tanks at the back were blown apart, and the flames and black smoke that rose were scattered with the cloudy skies in the backdrop. At that moment, a tremor shook the base, and the wind pressure and shockwave caused the war memorial beside the factory facilities and collapse. However, this was merely the start of the chaos befalling Torrington Base. The first wave of missiles ignited all over the base

, and 2 warheads that came a beat later exploded above the base, releasing 16,000 little grapeshots down like a torrent instantly.

Each grapeshot was not really powerful, but they were scattered across 6 football fields worth of land, and were enough to case panic throughout the entire Torrington Base. The glass windows of the headquarters were shattered without exception, and the ceilings of the barracks were wrecked; the exploded road surfaces slammed upon the heads of the soldiers who were unable to escape in time. The base had anti-air missiles measures, but with the radars jammed by the Minovsky particles, they were completely useless. The base had no way to fight back other than seeing the missiles being fired and deploy men to shoot them down. it had been 2 minutes since the raid started, and the garrison mobile suits were given the issue to sortie.

"Why's the enemy coming to attack such a rural base!?"

"All because that ship brought the enemy here!"

The pilot of the "GM II" looked at the large body of the "Ra Cailum", lying in the temporary port, and let loose these words with a look of disgust. This line however actually revealed the true thoughts of all the stationed troops who were suddenly attacked. A RGM-79R "GM II" squad crossed by the door of the hangar, shot down by a direct hit, and was preparing to sortie. As the model number indicated, this was a product with minimal modifications from the machines in the One Year War, but it was still the main fighting force of the guards at Torrington Base. While the "GM II" were equipped with either beam rifles or hyper bazookas, the MSA -003 "Nemo", a mobile suit developed at the beginning of the 2nd

generation , moved through the “GM IIs” and left the hangar as it lit its thrusters at where the missiles were coming from. A second wave of MLRS came swarming in, seemingly making up for the space left behind by the group of giants that jumped away, but the ones in charge of intercepting them was the “Guncannon DT”.

Torrington Base had been using “GM IIs” up till this point, and the upgrades to change their main forces to “GM IIIs” had been stalled; to it, the “Guncannon DTs” were important pieces to make up for the “GM IIs” lack of firepower. This was an experimental machine that ceased production after a few prototypes were produced, but the optical sensors for an artillery fight had good specifications, and were effective as movable cannons to assist in the base’s anti-air defenses. Once the garrison was launched, the three “Guncannon DT” on standby locked onto the missiles before they exploded. The support arms reached out from their backpacks, and they transformed into a cannon-firing mode to steady themselves as the two beam cannons on the shoulders aimed at the rockets firing over. The 4.7 Megawatt Mega Particles cannon boasted tremendous rapid-fire capabilities, and a rocket was shot down into an orange fireball. However, the second intercepting beam did not fire as another trail of fire was sniped at the “Guncannon DTs”, causing all three machines to be in chaos.

The MS-09F “Dom Tropen”, hidden at the rocks near the base, arrived earlier than the landing squad on the coast, and used this chance to wreck havoc as it started moving into the base from the east. The MS-09G “Dwadge” in the north moved in from the north. Both machines had hovers on their legs and charged into the base like an avalanche. The “Dom Tropen” let the Raketen rocket on its shoulder fire, which let an explosion trail of smoke near the feet of

a “Guncannon DT”, and drew the beamsaber on its back as it continued to attack. The “Guncannon DT” tried to readjust its bearings, but it was already too late as the beam saber sliced off the head with the optical sensor and sliced through the cockpit at the back.

The “Guncannon DT” collapsed as its arms laid weakly, and the MLRS came swarming in from another direction at the “Ra Cailum ”. Right before the small explosions occurred, the 3 main cannons located on the upper deck turned around and fired right at the missiles. The firepower of the main cannons far exceeded the mobile suits’ portable weapons, and the fire would probably affect the bases in its path, but there were no other effective anti-air measures in this situation. The “Ra Cailum” fired the thick beams that could be seen even in the day as it started to leave the ground. The CIWS weapons located all over the ship let out fires, intending to shoot down the “Dwadge” moving quickly through the blind spots of the buildings, but this however caused a fatal damage to the “Ra Cailum” as it was too focused on the enemy machines invading the base.

A transport carrier flying in at low height dropped off a new mobile suit, the AMX-101K “Galluss K”, which crushed the ground as it landed, and started an assault from the west side of the base. The hyper-bazooka on its right hand fired together with the beam cannon on its left shoulder, and the mega-particles that were fired at sublight speed hit the “Ra Cailum” directly. The gantry crane of the temporary dock was melted, and the beam that shot through the ship from the rear portside blew the armor together with the bazooka shot, causing the engine department of the “Ra Cailum” to take tremendous damage. Thick smoke

emerged out of the thruster nozzles, and the ship was rocked by an intense tremor as all unfastened items dropped onto the floor. The cranes dangling from the ceiling of the mobile suit deck swayed, and even the "Jestas" that were ready to launch could only sway their large bodies.

"A direct hit?"

"We need them to stop the cannon strikes! We can't launch like this!"

Squad leader Solton had already arrived onto the catapult deck, but the CIWS machine guns were firing in his launch path, and he could only shout out. Nigel looked past the back of the commander's machine and used the all-view monitor to lock in on the enemy machines rampaging through the base. He saw two Dom-type machines skillfully dodging the fires raining down from all directions and firing back with their rockets once they had the chance—

"They're using such old machines…"

He did not feel that the enemy was looking down on them. Once he realized that the enemy was going to attack even with such mobile suits, he gulped, his saliva full of bitterness.

This fear too struck the defense unit that was advanced to the coast. They continued to jump, and once they witnessed the strange rock formation melt due to the high heat, they realized that the enemy had already launched another squad to attack the base.

"Hozumi's "DT" is down! The enemies here are just bait!"

"Get the "Ra Cailum" people to deal with them. They have such high-specs mobile suits after all."

This line from the leader became the immunity required for the defense unit to continue on. The unnatural rocks were each as tall as a mobile suit, and the visibility in the area was rather bad. The leader split the squad into two teams, used the tactic of moving and cover each other, and drove his rouge-colored "Nemo" approximately 1km forward. The 5 mobile suits that formed team A stopped in their tracks as they got into a formation to cover, and the leader gave the signal for B team to move forward. The B team moved through the same path while moving through the weird rocks, but before the A team could move forward, a wire-like object flew in from a blind spot, causing the "Nemo" leader suit to lost its footing and fall.

The "Zaku Mariner" pulled the magnetic harken from its left arm sleeve and appeared from behind the rocks as it raised its missile launcher and fired at the "Nemo", which took a direct hit and exploded into flames. The "GM II" beside it frantically raised the beam rifles and fired back. Though the mega particle shot pierced through the rock, the "Zaku Mariner" continued to use its magnetic harken as it quickly moved, and another beam that shot in from another direction hit that "GM II" directly. As the "GM II" was engulfed in light and slammed into the rock, the "Zee Zulu" wielding a beam machine gun in its left hand darted out from the smoke, and leapt at the gunner "GM II" wielding a hyper bazooka.

It kept low, dodged the bazooka shot, charged at the enemy, swung its claws down to sever the head of the “GM II”, before leaping into the air.

Everything happened in an instant, and B team could not create covering fire in time. Another explosion rose from the other “ Nemo”, and the B team leader immediately ordered the team to scatter. Since they were ambushed, them gathering together would be the fastest way to their own demise. There was no mistake in the team leader’s judgment, but in other words, that action was also within the enemy’s prediction.

The cornice arm with many joints swung down, and the tip of the claws were stabbed into the chest of the “Nemo”. The “Capule ” dug out the moveable frame together with the armor, tossed aside the first enemy unit, and let the beam eye on its head fire. The goggle-shaped main camera was shot through, and the other “ Capule” saw the crushed rocks and the falling “GM II” in the corner of its sights as it fired the mega particle cannon on its abdomen. The seawater loaded in the dual-layered armor could be used in the cooling system, which allowed the amphibious machines to use a power generator that had a higher power output than an ordinary machine. The mega particles that was released caused the rocks to evaporate, create new explosions, and an array of beams, including the defense team’s, was crossing through the place.

Kirks, who was in the cockpit of the “Zaku I”, did not see this light as he was on the “Garencieres”, closing in on Torrington Base from the Southeast direction. It poked its upper body from the opened upper deck hatch and raised its sniper rifle to aim. The

machine's optical sensor had already caught sight of the "Ra Cailum" that was currently the size of a fingernail. The white frame of the "Ra Cailum" was giving off smoke in the aft and a sitting deck in the west side of the base, an that was the only object on the precision scope Kirks pulled to his sights.

"Good boy. Don't move there…"

He muttered as he aimed, and at that moment, the ship in the scope let out a flash, and a thick beam of mega particles grazed by the "Garencieres". It seemed that the enemy had already spotted the location of the sniper. One shot would be enough to blow the cover. But it was impossible for the enemy to detect them under the presence of Minovsky Particles. In contrast, Kirks had an outstanding optical equipment produced by the Khanom Company. The ship that was hit by the scattered particles continued to shake, and Kirks could not handle the shaking even if he zeroed his scope, but he still managed to catch sight of the "Ra Cailum" in his cross hair. He adjusted the beam output by checking the distance, angle and atmospheric conditions, and the moment the crosshair moved across the target, his finger on the trigger exerted some force.

The sniper rifle took in the power output from the sub-generator the unit was carrying on its back, and the beam came out from its nozzle. Kirks did not think too much into the explosion of light within the scope as he adjusted the angle by millimeters before firing again. There was a second explosion on the bow of the "Ra Cailum", and once he spotted the smoke coming out from the two main cannons, Kirks felt the sensation he had forgotten for a long time surge through his body. *I'm not dead*

yet. My machine and I are still alive! Kirks exclaimed in his heart as he was so pumped up he pushed the scope in front of him aside, " We're going, Kandle!" and spoke up into the wireless communicator within the helment.

The hatch above the ship opened, and Kirks' "Zaku I" leapt through it and jumped down to the surface, followed by Kandle's "Zaku Cannon". Both machines ignored the "Garencieres" flying over their heads as they landed in the debris of the colony in the wasteland. They then stepped on the steel bars buried in the sand as they glided into the debris.

Kirks had already known that this field of debris was used by Federation units as a training ground. It was 600m in height and less than 200m long in length and wide. If one were to include this information and the distance of approximately 30km to the base in the estimations, this section of what used to be a space colony could become the perfect sniping location. Kirks inspected the condition of the "Zaku I", got into sniping position, "I'll leave all incoming enemies to you." And notified Kandle's machine.

"My machine here is a tortoise with a heavy bag here. I'm doomed if some nimble new enemy suit comes running in here."

(Roger that. I won't allow any machine to approach.)

The "Zaku Cannon" slid down to a position lower than Kirks' machine and chose a position to spot, and used its hand manipulators to pull the strap of the big gun on its backpack. (Just focus on your job, commander.) Upon hearing these words from the other unit, Kirks surmised by saying, "Don't die before you can

see your kid's face.", and shook off everything other than sniping from his mind. He first activated the auxiliary equipment on its right knee, and once the "Zaku I", which was stabilized, got into a sniping position, he aimed the muzzle of the sniper rifle into the gaps between the materials. He could spot Torrington Base, lying in a midst of black smoke, through the crosshair of the precision scope.

After the main cannons on the bow were taken care of, the "Ra Cailum" was left with only the main cannon on the aft of the upper deck. If the ship did not leave the ground, the main cannons at the bottom would be useless. Once the main cannons were nullified, the enemy would have no firepower, either from the ship or the base, to snipe them down. Kirks would first have to shoot down the last main cannon to cover the "Garencieres" flying straight at the base. He moved his reticule slightly and began his first assignment. The sub-generator of the "Zaku I" rumbled, and the sniper rifle that was as long as the height of an enemy unit let out a beam.

The beam that could be spotted from the "Garencieres" was absorbed directly by the "Ra Cailum", and the aft immediately showed an explosion, indicating a direct hit. Zinnerman saw the light of explosion from the other side of the moving clouds. There was a "Geara Zulu" dragged out with the hangar from the aft of the ship, and when viewed from the machine's cockpit, the colony debris Kirks was hiding in looked like a skyscraper in the middle of the desert.

"That commander sure is skilled."

Kwani, seated on the linear seat, smiled as he said, but there was no need for anybody else to mention it. Kirks was able to skillfully pilot a mobile suit dated 20 years back and still hit the enemy's cannons. Zinnerman moved his body that was fastened down on the cramped assistant seat as he looked at the colony debris that was gradually moving away from him, *don't expose yourself too much,* and muttered in his heart before he turned his face. His hand touched the collared shirt he was wearing as he spotted the "Ra Cailum" that was gradually becoming bigger in front of him. Once he stared upon the ship that was still protected by its numerous CIWS guns despite the loss of the main cannon, Kwani's voice rang in his ears, "Sure fits you here."

Zinnerman saw the teasing stare from Kwani through the helmet, and felt the fear that had risen within him melt away. Even without anyone say it, he himself understood that the combination of his bearded face and a Federation officer uniform was something even he would laugh at. At the same time, he recalled the look Besson, in the Ivan unit, made, "Don't get shot down. I won't be happy about dying like this when I'm dressed up in this state." and quipped back. "Roger that!" Kwani however answered with enthusiasm.

"I'm going. Don't bite your tongue there."

A voice rang, and the restrains on the hangar were released as the two "Geara Zulus" were dropped. Kwani did not see the " Garencieres" off as he let the free-falling machine adjust itself and fired at the ground with his beam machine gun. The beam pellets were absorbed by the "Ra Cailum", and the anti-air fire that was several times heavier than what was dealt came flying at the air.

Zinnerman checked that the Ivan unit that descended was safe, exerted strength in his abdomen, and heard the sounds of machine guns that grazed by.

The Federation reinforcements will immediately come in from the air. If we're flanked by the new mobile suits squadron of the "Ra Cailum", the remnant army will definitely not last long. Got to hurry—Zinnerman muttered in his fearful heart, and forced his fear behind and stared at the incoming "Ra Cailum". The ship that was firing its numerous anti-air guns was like a hedgehog created by the fires.

Part 11

BOOM! The impact rocked the ship, and it was different from the feeling felt when the beam rifle hit the ship directly. Bright unwittingly tightened his grip on the captain's armrest, looked back at the main screen of the battle bridge, and the scene that appeared on it shocked him.

Two "Sleeves" mobile suits landed on the bow deck of the "Ra Cailum", intending to let their green bodies stand still. *Did the " Garencieres" drop them down as they passed by from above?* Bright forgot that he was still contacting the base commander as his mouth was slightly agape while he was trying to bellow. "THE ENEMY HAS BOARDED US! WHAT'S ALL THE CANNONS DOING!?" Meran however reacted faster as he yelled, his voice echoing through the battle bridge.

"Even if we can't use the main cannons, we can still aim with the machine guns. Chase them away!"

"The mobile suit squad can't launch because of the shots fired from the CIWS guns. Commander Solton's squad hopes that the guns will stop firing.

"But stopping the attack in this situation is—"

Meran spoke up, but he was interrupted by the enemy unit swinging its beam hook down on the screen, and a tremendous shock and explosion struck the entire ship. The footage on the screen was interrupted, "Camera 45 is down!" "Switch back to the normal bridge camera!" the bridge's key personnel were shouting. The battle bridge of the "Ra Cailum" was located lower than the ordinary bridge, and there were no windows in there at all. If the cameras were destroyed, there would be no way for them to know of what was going on outside, and the 6 bridge personnel looked like they were about to gasp, but that was before they switched over to the other cameras. The main screen was back to normal, and upon seeing the enemies from another angle, Bright heaved a temporary sigh of relief, "That's why I've been telling you this!" and then growled into the receiver in his hand.

"Our engines or shot, and we can't leave the ground even if we want to. Instead of that, please call back the defense squad mobile suits. The enemy suits at the coast are just decoys."

(I've been doing that without you telling me! The "Ra Cailum" just needs to focus on how to leave this base. The enemy's targeting you guys!)

In a corner of the main screen, the base commander could be seen on the communication window filled with noise, saying such

things unabashedly. Naturally, he was an incompetent blockhead, which was why he was sent to this backwater region, but Bright could not seize the command and cause a confusion in the command chain. “We’ll leave once the engine department finishes its emergency repairs.” He said patiently as he looked for the enemies that landed on the ship. A cannon strike then shot out from the bottom, and the machine that leapt out gradually disappeared into the blind spot of the camera.

“The enemy’s attacks are too intense, and we still can’t call back the civilians transferring over to the transport carrier. We’ll try our best to support, but we’ll need to base to cover us once the ship leaves. The base will be in trouble if anything happens to anyone related to the Vist Foundation, you know.”

It was not hard to imagine a commander, wanting to escape from his duty in this backwater region, would immediately follow an order issued directly from the Senate Council. The enemy unit was chased off by a launching “Jesta”, and could be seen retreating from the open air deck; “I-I understand!” the base commander was flushed with anger in a corner of the monitor.

(I’ll tell the defense squad to come back and defend…really, nothing good happens when we deal with “Gundams”!)

The commander let out these words that were either out of spite or his true thoughts as he cut the light. Bright was not willing to focus his attention on the fire as he checked the situation from the feed provided by the external cameras. They chased off the enemy units that climbed onto the ship, but the enemy units teamed up with the other 3 enemy units and were still within the base. Solton

and the Tri-Stars were fighting, but the Medea on the runway was still isolated. It was thanks to the "Jestas" moments that the long-ranged sniper that shot down the 3 main cannons on the ship was held of.

The ones making an accurate sniper fire seemed to be an old machine, and was yet toying with the newest generation "Jestas". Bright wanted to send a squad to take down the enemy sniper, but there was no meaning to it as that would weaken the defenses on the battleship and the transport carrier. It would be best if the base defense squad could return back for battle, but exactly how many friendly units could make it back safely—"This is certainly more thought out than we imagined." Bright muttered to himself, and Meran, who seemed to have the same feeling, "Is the enemy aiming for Mineva Zabi?" whispered.

"If that were the case, they won't be so reckless with their fire. They're probably aiming to get the "Unicorn"…that's quite the painful expense."

Meran seemed to have heard Bright's last line as he frowned in a perplexed manner. Meran did not know about Beltorchika's information regarding movements of the Zeon remnants. *It can't be helped,* Bright concluded in his heart. If Meran were to know about it, he would refuse to dock at the base even if he had to reject the Vist Foundation's request, and the ship would have to remain in the air until the enemy's intentions were clear, which would be meaningless. Bright himself was prepared for the need to bear this sudden raid.

Of course, he had already taken emergency countermeasures beforehand, and even informed the base commander of the basis behind this probable attack. Now that the situation had become like this, even if the base commander had not paid serious attention to it, the remaining responsibility would naturally fall upon him. Bright himself did not expect such severe damage, but there were no casualties amongst the ship crew at least, and he did not intend to have any. *This isn't injustice or immorality,* Bright convinced himself and muttered, "It's about time." Meran frowned as his slightly tanned face showed a suspicious look.

"Meran, use the command code. Try and contact the closest Londo Bell ship."

"Huh? But all the Londo Bell ships are keeping watch over the colonies. The battleships we can immediately send over are…"

"Isn't there one? Right above us?"

Bright pointed at the top and gave Meran a look, and the lattered seemed to understand the former's intent as he opened his mouth, "Don't tell me that's…", he eked out a trembling voice. " This is an emergency, and any requests for aid will be permitted no matter how it looks. The Senate Council won't grumble over this either." Bright argued back and turned his confident look to the front, believing that they could only do this.

"No need to draft a statement. Make immediate contact with them. Once the circuit's connected, I'll personally speak up."

Part 12

"…Anyway, first, we have to calm down in this kind of situation."

Otto Midas picked up the red tea cup poured from the room staff officer as he looked at every person in the eyes and said. All the key personnel of the "Nahel Argama", including those under First Officer Liam Borrinea, gave him depressed looks.

"It's been 2 weeks and 4 days since we're ordered to standby on orbit around Earth. I understand that all of you may feel anxious, and it's inevitable that there are disputes amongst yourself, but as the leaders of each department, you should remain calm even when taking action. The most important thing is to prevent any actions that will cause unrest amongst the crew and to conduct ourselves well…alright, drink up. This is a high-class red tea I finally managed to get. Forget everything as you're here, and let's enjoy this elegant tea time."

The full leaves from Quartier Latin, giving off a lavender aroma, were almost all used up, and Otto would have to endure with drinking using the bland tea bags until he was allowed back to " Luna II"—no, until he was allowed to return back to "Londenion" in side 1 and dine with his wife in the officer's residences. *At least taste it properly there,* he swallowed his grumbling that was about to come out from his throat, and took a sip from the tea cup. Everyone else then followed Liam, still showing no emotion, and slowly reached for their teacups.

Nobody was smiling at all. It had been half a month since the " Laplace" battle ended, and they were in orbit around Earth for more than half a month, so naturally, they did not have the mood to relax and drink tea. *How long until we can return back to the port? How does the Senate Council intend to deal with us?* The emotions that were building up for the past two weeks were about to explode from this silence, and a heavy atmosphere, far from elegance, descended upon them. At this moment, there was a notification alarm from the bridge, and every turned to the communication panel on the wall.

(Captain, there's an emergency message.)

Mihiro Oiwakken's tense voice overlapped with the sound of a certain person putting down his teacup violently. Otto however was not concerned by that sound as he glanced aside to look at everyone, who were looking at the communication panel excitedly, "Read it out." and answered with a calm tone. He personally believed deep in his heart that he was definitely panicking in his heart more than anyone else, but he still had to react calmly. No matter where the message came from, what kind of information it contained, it was imperative that he was to show his flair as a captain and accept it calmly. He used his fingers, which would tremble if he relaxed in the slightest, to hold onto the teacup, and took the bland red tea to his lips,

(Yes. From the "Ra Cailum", to the "Nahel Argama". Our ship is currently fighting against Zeon remnants in Torrington Base, need reinforcements. Open the direct communication line ASAP. That's all.)

Before Mihiro finished her words, Otto spat out all the red tea in his mouth.

Part 13

(Riddhe Marcenas, Romeo 008. Launching!)

Ensign Riddhe's voice could be heard from the opened wireless communicator, and the burst noise of the thrusters came from the ajar hatch. Since the enemy was right in front of them, there was no need to launch the machines from the catapult. Riddhe's "Delta Plus" flew off the catapult deck on its own power.

BOOM, SWOOSH…the sound of the mega particles being fired rang bellowed like a thunderclap, and the black "Unicorn"—the second RX-0 unit "Banshee" passed through the shutter leading to the catapult. *Is the one riding on it Marida?* Banagher looked up at the uniformly black mobile suit with the lone golden horn on the head as he wondered, and clenched his fists that were handcuffed. At a corner of the mobile suit deck, the heat released from the " Banshee" flowed into the blind spot of the trailer where the white "Unicorn" laid, and Alberto could be heard beside him, "Listen up , your first priority is to defend the Medea transport carrier." speaking into the wireless communicator.

"The substitute leader is on it, and she can't return to the ship because of the enemy attack. You have to ensure the safety of the transport carrier and eliminate the enemies…is your head still hurting?"

Banagher could not hear Marida's reply. "Good, don't force yourself." He looked at Alberto, who replied this and cut the line, from the corner of his eyes, and then looked up at the shutter gate where the "Banshee" walked out from. Once he passes through it, he would be able to see Audrey and the transport carrier that was still docked on the base's runway. The moment he thought about it , he felt uneasy, and his gut would tense up whenever the tremor of the explosion shook the ground; however, like the rest, he was in a situation where he was unable to move. He was to be brought up to the transport carrier together with the trailer as well, but the sudden enemy attack prevented him from leaving the ship, and he was unable to move within the mobile suit deck. The mobile suit squadron of the "Ra Cailum" had already launched to intercept, but the battle situation did not seem optimistic from what he heard on the wireless communicator. It seemed that the enemy units that invaded the base were not the only ones troubling them, and also included beams that were shot from long distance.

Who's the one attacking? Banagher looked up at the "Unicorn", lying on the trailer; the handcuffs attached onto his pilot suit rang as he was being pulled away, "Really, at this moment…" and stared at Alberto's back as the latter muttered. He could see the man with pudgy back supporting himself off the trailer and trembling slightly.

Maybe this man's emotions are rather delicate. Banagher had this thought again as he looked up at the states of the two black-clothed Vist subordinates flanking him, and at this instant, he suddenly had an idea he never thought before. He looked up at the "Unicorn", and thought, *can I do it?* and asked his throbbing heart. *If I don't move now, am I going to wait for my doom?* such a

reply came to him, and he took a deep breath and turned his stare at Alberto's back.

"So even those who can control wars will feel scared?"

He moved all the muscles on his tense face as he showed a daring mocking smile. As expected, Alberto looked back in shock, "Who do you think is the cause of this…" and glared back to say to him,

"If you had listened to instructions obediently, we wouldn't have needed to spend so much effort in getting trailer to move the "Unicorn", right? If the ship didn't need to land, we wouldn't need to face the attack of those Zeon scrap metal. You're really the plague."

Alberto grumbled as he ranted everything at one go, only to suddenly show a startled expression, "Don't tell me you planned this with those guys?" Banagher looked back at the fearful and doubtful eyes of the other man, "Even if I say it is, what are you going to do?" and gave a more sinister smile.

"Are you going to give up on finding the "Box" and kill me?"

He raised the lips on his face, and the smile looked really forced , but Alberto did not look like he could tell. He seemed to be overwhelmed by Banagher's momentum, and pulled his chin in as he looked away. "In the worst case scenario, we'll probably have to move the "Unicorn" later." He said to the black subordinates following him, and Banagher merely moved his eyes, paying attention to the subordinates' reactions.

"If possible, let the transport carrier leave the ground. The safety of the substitute leader is priority."

"Yes." The subordinates said as they left the scene and went off to the driver seat. Alberto watched them leave, and suddenly glared at Banagher; he grabbed the latter by the chest and pulled him over. "I won't kill you that easily." He whispered at Banagher' s ears, and immediately pushed him aside.

"I won't do anything to you until we find the "Box". As far as what we do to you after that, it'll all depend on your performance. "

With his back turned towards Banagher, who took a few steps back, "Move the trailer to the back of the deck, and move out when you can." Alberto called out to the driver seat. Banagher watched him walk towards the driver seat, and upon hearing the ignition of the trailer engines, he made up his mind. This would be the only chance. He waited for the trailer to move, and after several seconds , the wheels that were as tall as a human started to spin. The 16 wheeler vehicle drove off, and Banagher used that opportunity to sprint off.

He darted part Alberto and ran right at the cockpit. "What the?" "Hold it!" with the angry growls behind him, he dashed past the driver seat and ran straight at the front end of the trailer. Once he spotted the appearance of the pilot, he closed his eyes and got down on the floor. The pressure of the several tons vehicle went by his head, and the heat of the engine blew over his back, before the shrill sound of an emergency brake surrounded him.

"Was he run over!?" "WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING!?" the voices of Alberto and the rest could be heard. Banagher twisted his body, rolled away from where they were, got out from the gap between the wheels, and used the momentum to roll out and stand. He leaned himself onto the ladder at the side of the vehicle, took a leap up, gritted his teeth, and only thought about rushing onto the platform.

As long as you don't give up, the opportunity will definitely come— Banagher relied on Captain Bright's words as support and used his handcuffed hands to grab onto the ladder for support as he moved his feet on the steps. He would be able to see the "Unicorn" once he got on, and if he could get into it, he would be able to find a way to escape. He looked up at the white machine that laid weakly , and just when he reached his hands to the platform. "He's here!" the voice caused him to panic. The Vist subordinate poked his upper body from the driver seat and aimed its pistol at Banagher, who, upon seeing the other man in the eyes, felt that he could not move his arms grabbing the ladder.

"It's fine if he doesn't die! Just shoot the legs or anywhere else!"

Alberto yelled as he went around the back of the vehicle, and the subordinate narrowed his eyes as he used the finger to flick the hammer. Banagher could not even close his eyes as he heard a sound that caused his hairs to stand. He knew that he would be shot if he remained still, but he could not move. He could not bear the killing intent, which he could dodge within the mobile suit, with his body of flesh alone—

"Get down!"

At that moment, a heavy sound rang, and Banagher's body reacted on its own as it let go of the handrail on its own. The sound of metal clashing with each other rang above his head, and he watched the sparks scatter off the ladder and rain down. As he rolled onto the floor again, he heard the sound of a machine gun being fired, and could see sparks flying near the car of the driver seat. The subordinates immediately jump off the driver seat and hid behind the blind spot of the vehicle. The mechanics nearly ducked down, and the subordinates used the vehicle as a shield and immediately shot back.

The machine gun shots were many times that of the pistols as they hit the vehicles, and a subordinate could only give up on the gunfight as they hid into the corner. The other pushed Alberto down and got onto him to protect him, and the bullets of the machine gun went above their heads. Two figures immediately charged out from the blind spot of the hangar, and Banagher could sense a throbbing on his chest that was lying on the floor. One of the men raised his sub machine gun and fired, while the other man used this chance to get into the driver seat of the trailer, and turned his head back to look at Banagher. That man in Federation uniform stared right at Banagher's eyes, and his wide open mouth was covered with bearded stubble.

"Over here! We're running!"

The sparks of the bullet impacts struck the door of the driver seat, covering Zinnerman's face as he spoke up. He got onto the floor and fired back with a submachine gun, and Besson, who was also in a grey uniform, used the covering fire to leap into the

driver seat. Banagher saw the driver get pulled out and tumble onto the floor, and immediately got up. He ran out without a care about the crossfire, and at that moment, Zinnerman threw a grenade over his head, causing an explosive light and a loud bang behind him.

The yellowish smoke spread in an explosive manner. “It’s a smoke grenade!” “Close the shutter!” numerous sounds could be heard from behind. Banagher was ostensibly chased by the smoke as he got into the cockpit, but his hand was suddenly grabbed by another arm, and he was pulled in as a result. The hard metal fist-like feeling reverberated through his body, *why?* but before he could ask back, “Are you an idiot? You’re doing such unreasonable things here!” a familiar voice chastised him and rang in his ears.

“The plan we finally managed to come up with is all for naught. You just had to wait for your rescue quietly…!”

Zinnerman merely expressed his thoughts in his eyes for just a short moment, and immediately pushed Banagher into the vehicle and shot some suppressing fire from the opened vehicle door. Besson, seated in the driver seat, spun the steering wheel, and started the engines of the trailer as it boomed. “In that case, we can only barge in. Step on the gas!” Zinnerman shouted, and Besson immediately stepped on the pedal, causing the trailer to knock aside the crates of materials as it accelerate. Banagher was held down on the seat, and the pressure of the shutter closing slightly appeared in front of him, causing him to gasp.

The “Unicorn” on the platform barely missed the shutter, and the sparks caused by the friction caused the vehicle to tremble. The subordinates chasing the vehicle disappeared behind the shutter, and once the trailer barely managed to pass through the shutter, it accelerated again. From here on, it was a one-way street through the landing deck of the ship. Banagher could see the several mechanics dodge by frantically from the front glass window, and could only widen his eyes in shock as he could not comprehend what was going on. “Give me your hands.” He heard this voice, and turned his head to Zinnerman. He followed the instructions, and a gunshot rang within the vehicle as the short chain linking the cuffs.

“Hurry up and get onto the “Unicorn”. The “Garencieres” is waiting in the sky.”

Zinnerman quickly explained and looked at the opened hatch of the landing deck 300m in front of them. At this moment, Banagher finally realized that everything, including the mobile suits that were creating chaos outside, were fighting as part of this operation , and he got up from his seat before he could think. He moved towards the rear hatch leading to the platform, looked back, and asked, “What are you going to do, captain?” Zinnerman reloaded his sub-machine gun, “We’ll fine a DO-DAI and escape.” And answered without looking at the other person in the eyes.

“Get on the back deck. Once you get into the “Unicorn”, cover us—”

“Captain, Audrey, Princess Mineva is on this ship.”

Banagher interrupted as he spoke up. “What did you say…!?” Zinnerman muttered, and at the same time, sparks appeared on the front of the front glass. Besson quickly spun the steering wheel, and the snaking trailer was rubbing against the left inner wall. The frictional sound was deafening, “MISS MARIDA’S HERE TOO!” and Banagher yelled with a voice no softer than that.

“Princess Mineva’s on the transport carrier outside, while Miss Marida’s piloting the black “Unicorn”. Tell the others not to attack it. She doesn’t know who I am anymore.”

“What’s going on? Why are the Princess and Marida…”

The front glass got shattered, and round fragments flew into the vehicle. “We’re almost there!” Besson groaned, and once Zinnerman saw that the deck hatch was already right in front of their eyes, “Talk later. Hurry up, Banagher!” he exclaimed and grabbed his sub machinegun again.

“Really, I’m always shocked by you.”

There’s a sense of familiarity in his eyes as he glanced at Banagher, and he immediately turned forward and squeezed the trigger to fight back. “Same goes for you!” Banagher yelled through the gunshot, and darted through the back hatch as his chest was heating up. He climbed up the ladder, got onto the platform, and found the frame of the “Unicorn” lying on it.

Part 14

The Dwadge-type mobile suit used its hovers hidden within its expanded legs and the skirt-shaped waist armor, and moved like a skater on ice. The "Ra Cailum" mobile suits were rather agile too, but the "Dwadge", which could seemingly move its limbs at will, was moving quite abnormally. It's bulky and seemingly slow body glided over the roads, dodged the beam attacks of the Federation units, and let the large bazooka on its shoulder, shoot out smoke.

The fired rocket grazed past the Federation unit's head and triggered a pillar of fire next the rear deck of the "Ra Cailum". *This is obviously a diversion, they can't possibly know that I'm here. Are they aiming for the "Unicorn"?* Mineva secretly peeked over at a few other Zeon mobile suits moving to and fro, and leaned her forehead on the window of the transport carrier. The explosion spread within the carrier, and a trail of smoke flowed in. At the moment the ink-like black smoke covered her sights, she witnessed a black shadow charging in.

The black shadow suddenly appeared, and the "Dwadge" intending to avoid a direct conflict suddenly staggered. The black "Unicorn"—the "Banshee" did not let this chance slip away as it raised its beam saber and swung it down. The "Dwadge" wanted to draw the beam saber on its back, but its upper body that was sliced apart from the shoulder tilted weakly and fell to the side. The machine that was melted and sliced diagonally was etched in Mineva's eyes, and became an expanding fireball as the boom rang everywhere.

The transport carrier took the winds of the explosion as it let out a rattling sound, and the windows shuddered. The "Banshee"

looked like it wanted to chase away the blood trails as it swung the beam saber down with one hand, and back from past its shoulders, causing Mineva to unwittingly turn her head away. The "Banshee" abstained from all unnecessary movements as its crisp movements reflected the endurance of the pilot within. It was too cold to call them martyrs, the Zeon soldier that disappeared in the explosion, and Marida, who was mind-controlled to kill her comrade—

"How impressive."

Martha, who unknowingly got behind her, had the color of fire reflected in her eyes as she said. "Do you know? In the past, a certain country once let the men and female members of a special forces fight each other, and the ones who won were the females." The emphasizing voice at the end caused Mineva's hands on the window to tense.

"Perhaps, it's because in terms of biology, women aren't unnecessary. However, that scene might be cruel to those whose eyes only see fragility."

The "Banshee" kept the beam saber it used in his rack, and charged into the fire to look for the next pretty. *Marida,* Mineva called out in her heart, "Your Highness, please enjoy." and she heard Martha say from behind.

"The self-satisfaction men have will all—be severed by her sword."

Martha clenched her hand that was pressing against the window, seemingly wanting to crushing something in her hand.

At that moment, Mineva had a feeling that it was this vengeance that was driving Martha, and the rage within Marida's heart was driven by this poison, but even after doing this, nothing could improve for the better. She realized her helplessness once again, and felt like her close eyelids were trembling, only to suddenly hear a sound that caused her heart to race.

She opened her eyes and looked outside the window. Something from throbbing inside the "Ra Cailum", where a beam was being shot at from afar. She once felt this beast-like sensation—resonating with her throbbing, and causing a surge within her heart. Thud, thud, this energy that was gradually becoming larger was slowly awakening inside the white ship.

It's coming. What is it? the subject itself was lacking however as Mineva looked at the after of the "Ra Cailum". The landing deck protruded at the back started to shudder, forming a slope for transporting goods in and out. There was a small light deep within at the back hatch leading into the ship, starting to move.

Part 15

The trailer knocked aside the material crates as it passed through the deck hatch at the back, and was already giving off black smoke from its engines. The vehicle ferrying the weight of the "Unicorn" charged outside, landed on the slope in a half-gliding manner, and the driver seat was completely blown off by the bullets. The exploded engines sputtered our flames, causing the burning scrap metal to flow onto the sloped surface, and the

vehicle, engulfed in flames skidded onto the temporary port runway before moving another few meters forward due to inertia, only to stop at the anchor near the temporary runway.

(At the rear deck! The enemy has invaded the ship and is intending to get the "Unicorn". Don't let them leave the base. Secure the machine!)

Nigel was clashing beam sabers with a "Dom Tropen" as squad leader's Solton's growl rang through the wireless communicator. " At this time…!" Nigel grumbled as the enemy tried to rip the visor protecting the main camera from the "Jesta" head. At the same time, he deployed the shield on his left arm and stepped on the pedal. The mobile suit with its thrusters lit charged right at the enemy, and the "Dom Tropen" could not take it as it fell backwards.

The enemy unit collapsed onto the mechanics' hangar and fell into the dust, but it immediately used the hovers on its waist to adjust itself. He was piloting an old mobile suit, but he was definitely a seasoned veteran. Nigel continued to protect the visor of the "Jesta" main camera, "Daryl, Watts!" he shouted into the wireless communicator.

"I'm a little busy here. Go secure the "Unicorn", and don't let any enemy unit close in on it!"

(Got it!) However, before he could hear their responses, the " Dom Tropen" got behind and started to swing its beam saber. Nigel dodged to the side as he let the "Jesta" turn around and raise its beam rifle. *I can hit it.* The moment he believed this, the beam

that came flying from the side grazed the machine, and the "Dom Tropen" in his path disappeared.

The "Jesta" immediately leapt up and barely managed to dodge the attack from the enemy's beam saber. The "Dom Tropen" fired its bazooka to hold off its army, and let it hide behind the Medea. The snipe came from afar due to a sniper shooting from outside the base, and the enemy unit, which nearly got defeated, escaped. "GET THE TRANSPORT CARRIER OUT OF THE WAY! TELL THEM TO HURRY UP AND LEAVE THE GROUND!" Nigel was enraged as he yelled out. First, they would have to eliminate the sniper, but they currently did not have any fighting forces to counter it. The "Ra Cailum" mobile suits were focused on defending the ship and the transport carrier, which meant that they were on the defensive. (They're getting ready to leave immediately.) Upon hearing the response from the communication operator, "HURRY UP!" he yelled again. But at that moment, (This …!?) (It's moving!) Daryl and Watts' voices could be heard from behind, causing Nigel to look back at the "Ra Cailum" in shock.

There was a humanoid silhouette at the starboard engine that was wrecked just a moment ago, and was rumbling on a trailer that was in a fireball. A foot stepped onto the ground first, and the upper body that should be fastened down by wires slowly got up, before the large white body stood up straight from the platform.

While Daryl and Watts were standing idly in their "Jestas", the "Unicorn" stood on the ground on its legs, lifted its head, and showed a glow in its dual-eye sensor under the facemask. Its two eyes under the horn were giving off a demonic presence, and Nigel felt goosebumps of unease. The white machine ripped apart the

wires on its body, and with its back facing the flames, it stood forward. (What is that bastard playing around with…!) Watts yelled as he let his "Jesta" charge at the "Unicorn" standing there.

"Wait! Don't approach it now! It's—"

How are we supposed to treat it? Nigel swallowed the latter half of his words as his eyes followed Watts' machine, and saw the " Unicorn" grab Watts' beam rifle with its right hand. Watts unit stumbled forward together with its beam rifle and crashed into the "Unicorn" chest head on, and the "Unicorn" used its hands to grab the opponent, twist its waist, and pushed the "Jesta" back without waiting for it to gather itself.

The slender machine released unfathomable arm strength as Watts' "Jesta" was knocked out and left the ground for a short moment. Daryl's unit caught its ally, and was knocked back as well as both men's cries echoed through the noise of the wireless communicator, starling Nigel. The overwhelming power and agile response—was something the "Jesta" could not compare to at all. The approaching alarm allowed him to regain his senses, and though he was dealing with the other enemy unit closing in from behind, he still could not forget the feeling of cold sweat on his back in such a short time.

"That's the "Unicorn"…!"

Part 16

The twin-barreled beam Gatling guns and the shield were still equipped on the left arm, and to Banagher, it was a fortunate thing

. He continued to fire shots to suppress the Federation machines in front of him, and let the “Unicorn” leap off, “Captain!” as he called into the wireless communicator in his helmet.

The flat modified DO-DAI passed through the black smoke from the trailer and went above the “Unicorn” head. It flew out from the rear shutter of the “Ra Cailum” and turned the mobile suit landing platform towards the “Unicorn”. “We’re leaving! Hop on!” Zinnerman exclaimed as his voice rang in Banagher’s ears. However, Banagher immediately turned away, “No!” and shouted back at the DO-DAI that was about to pick the “Unicorn” up.

“Audrey’s still inside the transport carrier. I’m going to take her back together with Miss Marida!”

He fired off a screen of bullets and turned towards the transport carrier on the runway. The dual-bodied machine had a large container in the middle, and the wings that were about 70m long were moving forward together with this large body, clearly showing that the transport carrier was about to leave the ground. (Don’t force yourself! The enemy reinforcements will be here too!) Banagher ignored Zinnerman’s shout as he stepped on the pedal. The “Unicorn” leapt off hard from the cracked asphalt and immediately jumped more than 100m as it closed in on the craft.

“Audrey!”

The four jet engines on the transport carrier let out high heat, allowing it to glide faster. The 4 engines under the wings increased their power output, and Banagher landed the “Unicorn”, covered by the jet streams formed from the transport carrier, before

lighting the machine's thrusters again, and got to the side of the craft. There was a familiar face shown from a window near the cockpit, at the side of the bow. The emerald eyes were wide open, and Banagher could tell that Audrey, who had her face sticking at the window, was calling out for him. It was just a little distance before they could meet, and the "Unicorn" used the Gatling guns to suppress the Federation machine, glide past the surface with the maximum thrust, and reached its hand to the window of the transport carrier. However, just when its fingertips were about to touch the machine, another machine suddenly crashed in from aside, causing the "Unicorn" to fall towards the ground.

The "Unicorn" skidded on the asphalt and rolled off several meters, only to finally stop after knocking down the marker light. The beam saber went past the transport carrier and drew its beam saber as it charged right at the "Unicorn". Banagher lifted his head, buried in the air bags as he too lit the beam from the saber's hilt, and blocked the high heat particles that came right at his sights. The clashing blades let out heat and interfering waves, and the tremendous light showed the face of the "Delta Plus".

"Ensign Riddhe…!?"

(Banagher! Have you really become a Neo Zeon member…!?"

The solid anger pierced through the armor of the machine and came right at Banagher. it was a stubborn will that was overly stiff, one that felt impossible to communicate it. it was so sudden that the face of the "Delta Plus" in front of him was like a devil's face,

and he could sense all warmth of the human called Riddhe disappear as he pulled the control stick in the moment of extreme stress.

"NOW'S NOT THE TIME FOR THIS!"

With that roar, the "Unicorn" pushed the "Delta Plus" back and kicked at the abdomen. The "Delta Plus", which retreated back, parried away the attack, lit the thrusters on its back and glided behind the "Unicorn". It swung its beam saber down, and a beam saber blocked it, creating lots of sparks. The scattered high heat particles burned both machines, and the transport carrier was gradually moving away from the flash.

Now's not the time for this. Banagher felt that the distance between both of them was very far, and gritted his teeth anxiously. The gathered beams clashed twice, thrice, creating an empty light in a corner of Torrington Base.

Part 17

The "Galluss K" got up to stand in front of the new Federation machines to protect the 'Geara Zulu" with its arm cut off, but the " Giant Bass" in its hands seemed to have run out of ammunition. The retractable arm was swung out, and as the Federation machine was unable to raise its guard, the "Galluss" fired the beam cannon on its shoulder to create a chance to attack. However, 3 new generation machines surrounded it, and a thrown grenade created an explosion of fire behind. Kirks sensed that the "Galluss K" was being surrounded as it was being rattle, he squeezed the trigger on the control stick even after knowing that the power was not

completely changed. The "Zaku I" shot out mega particles from the sniper rifle, and the pink beam reached towards Torrington Base 30km in front.

The beam was supposed to graze past the Federation units, but dissipated due to a lack of power output, and the "Galluss K" ended up attacked by the 3 machines. The Federation machines clashed with it, and its arms were severed, and the machine, with the pilot inside, was dealt a fatal blow as it knelt down on the ground; the sights of the precision scope could see the light from the fireball caused by the explosion of the "Galluss K". Kirks could not help but close his eyes, and heard a soft dull sound that came a beat later through the armor. *This is the second unit to bite the dust after Holum's "Dwadge". The only ones left are Yasu's "Dom Tropen" and the two "Geara Zulus" of the "Garencieres", but they're running out of ammunition, and they're losing effectiveness in being distractions. I can't tell how many of the machines are still around.*

Is it time to stop? Kirks muttered and looked at the battlefield of giants again. *We wore down less enemy forces than we predicted; it's a pity, but the "Unicorn" can already move on its own, and the sniping had already slowed the enemy ship down. It's necessary that we retreat before the Federation transformable units appear in the sky. This "Zaku I " sub generator is going to be at its limit. Considering that I have to remain until the end and stop all pursuing forces, I can't use up all the battery power here. Looks like it's time to close shop.*

It's good to retreat like a defeated dog at this moment now, isn't it? Kirks convinced himself, and as he was about to let a signal flare to indicate a retreat, the silence of the wireless communicator was filled with noise. (Can you hear me, commander?) Zinnerman's

voice was mixed in, and Kirks instinctively reached his hand for the helmet.

(Her Highness Mineva's in that transport craft that's about to leave! Please shoot the bottom to prevent it from leaving if you can aim at it!)

Kirks did not understand the meaning behind these words immediately. Upon hearing this voice that made his heart race, " Her Highness's on it!? What's going on!?) he hollered back, (I'll tell you the details later! Leaving it to you, please!) Zinnerman shout was drowned out by the noise, and the wireless communicator was suddenly cut off. Kirks did not waste time on adjusting the wireless communicator as he turned his eyes to the scope again, and spotted the Medea-type transport carrier beside the "Ra Cailum". The old C-85 was not equipped with a VTOL function, and its large body was slowly accelerating as it glided down the runway, surrounded by the lights of beams and explosions.

He never thought that Her Highness Mineva—the sole heir to the Zabi family would be on it. He could still aim at the Medea's landing gear now. At this current speed, even if it loses its legs, it would ignite into flames. *This can work,* Kirks considered as a sniper, and put his finger at the rifle trigger again. It seemed that Kandle too heard the content of the transmission, (Leader, this is… !?) on hearing this doubtful question, "It's just like what you heard " he merely answered as he aimed the crosshair at the Medea's landing gear.

"In the end, the stage is still all set for us. Don't let anyone else approach. We're saving Her Highness for sure."

(Un…understood!) Kandle's voice came through the wireless communicator. It was because of such moments that a human life was not something a human could easily part with. *Just think that we stayed on Earth just for this moment, and all the tragedy and downs we had for 17 years would be affirmed.* Kirks let out a warm sigh, felt that he managed to curb his own enthusiasm, and squeezed the trigger with the usual power. The sniper rifle muzzle let out a flare of mega particles, and an arrow of light reached out, absorbed by the Medea.

A small amount of light came from the rear wheel, causing the asphalt on the runway to be chipped off. *Did I make a mistake with the acceleration? Calm down.* He thought in his heart silent as he waited for the charge to end. The "Medea" got out from behind the "Ra Cailum", and was turning horizontally on the scope. There was still 5 seconds until it finished charging, 3 second, 1 second. He gritted his teeth, and was about to squeeze the trigger with his relaxed finger, but a light that was different from a rifle shot entered his eyes, and the "Zaku I" took a tremendous jolt.

I got hit by a beam. The moment he understood this, the ground at his feet collapsed, and the rusted steel frame and rubble rained down on the "Zaku I". The sight of the precision scope was lifted up, and the machine, as it tumbled, fell together with the collapsed ground. *This isn't an ordinary beam. Has the "Ra Cailum" main cannons regained functionality?* He let the machine grab the side of the structure and land upon some ground that had yet to collapse, and aimed his rifle at the scorching hot wall collapsing outside.

The blocks of rubble landed like icicles, and as he tried to catch sight of the Medea in the scope, he spotted a black machine racing through, whipping up a large amount of dust.

The black machine was wielding a beam rifle with both hands, and sped through the wilderness like it was sprinting. The enemy unit with the shining lone golden horn was charging right at the debris of the colony. Kirks spotted Kandle's "Zaku Cannon" leave its standby position as it landed on the ground. "Come back, Kandle!" He shouted at the wireless communicator, but the "Zaku Cannon showed no signs of turning back as it closed in on the enemy unit—the black "Unicorn", and fired a screen of shots at it.

The 180mm cannons on its shoulders opened fire together with the big guns on the sides of its waist. The cannon fire of the physical ammunition created a swirl of smoke, and the empty shells continued to pile beside the "Zaku Cannon" . Kirks could hear Kandle's roar in the middle of the cannon fire, but the black " Unicorn" dodged the shot that rained down like a storm, and crossed by the "Zaku Cannon". It crossed the "Zaku Cannon", their beam sabers clashed, and the black machine immediately disappeared from their sights.

(Captain, I'll leave Princess Mineva…!) Kandle's shout was drowned out by the noise, and the "Zaku Cannon" was sliced in half at the waist, and surrounded by an explosion of light. Kirks gritted his teeth as he hear the voice and the explosion ring on his skullcap, and widened his eyes to look at the scope as he focused thoroughly on aiming at the Medea.

The craft was faster than before and was leaving the runway. *It can work.* Kirks caught sight of the landing gear in the middle of his crosshair, and put his finger at the trigger, where he placed all his agony and hatred into. However, before he could squeeze the trigger, his sight was blocked by a black shadow, shocking him beyond words.

The black "Unicorn" immediately leapt up the debris that stood 600m above the wilderness, and opened its body wide. A golden glow was radiated from its machine, and the expanding armor was gradually changing in figure as the two eyes gave a mysterious light, looking down at Kirks. The horn on the forehead became a V-sigh, and the symbol of Zeon's defeat was etched in Kirks' eyes as his body started to tremble with the premonition that he was about to be killed.

"You're going to get in our way again, "GUNDAM"…!?"

He yelled and squeezed the trigger. At the same time—no, a millisecond before, the fingertip of the black "Unicorn" squeezed the trigger, and exploding mega-particles expanded as it covered the "Zaku I". The cockpit was immediately burned, and the rampaging high heat particles caused the body to boil. That was the last light Kirks saw.

The Beam Magnum released a shot that had 4 times the energy of an ordinary beam rifle, and the "Zaku I" was annihilated in absolute light, piercing through the debris of the colony. A hole was blasted through the wall on the other side, and the heat that melted the metal scraps surged about with the shockwaves as the

debris, tilted into the ground, trembled, and the gravel and peeled exteriors fell to the ground. The colony debris was surrounded by brown dust, and the large building appearance started to collapse. The dust reached the cloud together with the air flow, and a signal fire indicating the end of something appeared in the corner of the wilderness.

Part 18

The monoeye was gradually buried in the collapsing debris like a joke. *You're going to get in our way again, "GUNDAM"*? The last cry of the pilot echoed in Marida's ears, causing her to suddenly sense that she was losing her sight, and shook her head to gather her concentration on the "Banshee" controls.

The machine passed through the dust that swirled out, and landed approximately 1km away from the colony debris. Torrington Base could be seen on the other side of the horizon, still surrounded by black smoke, and her eyes that laid upon there was seeing the Medea transport carrier being lifted gradually. The battle was about to reach its end. There were flashes that would appear in the black smoke from time to time, but those were the lights of the facilities exploding when they were destroyed. However, there was a tremendous flash of light, different from the explosions, likely the flash created when beam sabers .

The "Unicorn" is currently fighting. Marida recalled the sight she witnessed before she left the base, and felt that she was looking for that light. Her mission to protect the transport carrier, and after defeating the sniper unit that was hidden in the colony, she could tell that the enemy "presence" that was controlling the battlefield

had already vanished…*but what's with this tentative feeling? Does it have anything to do with the light? The "Unicorn"—is that mobile suit, the same RX-0 as the "Banshee", the enemy? Is that an enemy with the same appearance as me—*

Banagher. This name suddenly appeared in her mind, and she felt her head hurt again. She swallowed her bitter saliva and endured the disgust that swelled up in her. (Ple Twelve, do you hear me?) a voice could be heard from the wireless communicator, causing her eyelashes to shudder.

(I've sent someone to pick you up. It's a transformable mobile suit called the "Anksha". Once you get on it, continue your mission to protect the substitute leader. The enemies on the ground have already retreated, but the ship may still be attacked. I 'll follow right afterwards.)

That was the voice of her Master—Alberto Vist. "Yes." Marida pressed onto her throbbing head as she answered. (I got the identification code for the "Anksha". Okay, it's important that you inform me once your head hurts.) Marida did not care about the words that came next as she turned her sights to the clouds covered by the thick clouds. She could see a disc-shaped machine descending from the other end of the dust covered clouds towards her.

The motion sensor showed a matching signal, and the word " RAS-96" appeared on the screen. That's called the "Anksha", right ? Name and model number, Marida and Ple Twelve. As she wondered why there was a need for two different identifications, she looked at the RAS-96 signal approaching her without being

overly annoyed by it. *What is a name? What significance does it bear? It'll simply cause confusion to call the same thing two different names.*

Marida shook her head to retrieve her consciousness that nearly faded again. *There's no significance in a name. I just need something to identify. I'm Ple Twelve, an existence meant to serve master. I should fulfill my master's wishes and beat all enemies of masters. Haven't I been living this way in the past? I fought against all people, things, objects that robbed the 'light' within me, and I don't need others…*

There's a paradox in this thinking. You've confused your thoughts in living for your master and for yourself. Upon hearing a certain calm voice explain this, Marida—Ple Twelve, gave up on thinking. She followed the instructions of the "Anksha" pilot as the signal blinked, and grabbed the control sticks again. The NT-D system vanished, the expanded armor contracted, and the "Banshee" was not in destroy mode any more as its horn was gathered in the center.

I just don't have to think. I can continue to fight as long as I don't think. The "Anksha" machine went above Ple Twelve, and she lit the thrusters of the "Banshee" to leap and land on the disc-shaped platform. The top of the "Anksha" met the "Banshee" limbs like a person riding on an eel, and once the round disc, which took the 30 ton mass, swayed for a moment, the "Anksha" immediately accelerated and charged into the clouds.

The transport carrier ferrying the substitute leader was flying into the clouds too. Ple Twelve used the response on the sensors to look for other machines, but no matter where she looked, a milky white mist was the only thing covering her sight, and she could

not even tell where she was. She stared at the mist that became clouds, and blankly realized that it was just like how it looked in her mind.

Part 19

The beam sabers clashed and let out a flash of interference waves, covering the clouds that swallowed the transport carrier. The heat waves that could practically be a form of impact plummeted on the armor covering the cockpit, and Banagher exerted strength into his arms grabbing the control sticks again. The "Unicorn" continued to cross blades with the "Delta Plus", and let a foot step onto the asphalt. (Banagher, which side are you on!?) Riddhe's yell could be heard through the wireless communicator.

(What's the point of someone with the Vist blood helping Neo Zeon…!?)

The "Delta Plus" charged over with the shoulder armor, and the weight of two machines was pressed upon the "Unicorn" leg as it trampled through the asphalt, where the cracks continued to expand. The expanding heat waves swirled upon the asphalt shrapnel and blew away the base fence together with the dirt. Upon witnessing this scene, Banagher let the "Unicorn" withdraw and ducked to the side of his opponent. He drew a new beam saber from his back, and two set of beam particles were aligned in a cross. "This has nothing to do with bloodlines at all!" Banagher yelled back with all he had as he let the two beam blades cushion the slash from the "Delta Plus" overhead strike.

"The Federation and Neo Zeon have nothing to do with me! I just want to save Audrey!"

The "Delta Plus" was forced back by the beam sabers that were laid across each other, and stumbled backwards. Banagher used this opportunity to let the "Unicorn" step off the ground and escape from Torrington Base. The Zeon mobile suits that entered the base were gradually retreating, and if he did not meet up with Zinnerm an and the rest as soon as possible, he would be surrounded by the mobile suits of the "Ra Cailum". He used the thrusters on its feet as a hover off the ground and looked for the " DO-DAI Kai" in the clouds above him. (I'm the same as you here!) however, the voice from behind caused Banagher to click his tongue. The "Delta Plus" readied the beam saber at its hip and charged forward, letting out a thruster flare as it charged forward, closing the distance between it and the "Unicorn" in an instant.

(Zeon's already a vanquished country. Its country name will soon disappear afterwards. Even if you bring her to that sort of place, there's no future to say of!)

"Aren't they the same too? The Foundation's using Audrey as a hostage, the Federation's idling around and ignoring things, and they're telling me that I need to spend some time to think!"

Banagher turned around to deflect the beam saber that was sweeping over, and let the machine glide diagonally behind its opponent. He did not let the opponent have a chance to turn back as he swung the beam saber in the left hand at the "Delta Plus", which raised its shield to block this strike, and the followed up on that strike by raising the beam saber in its right hand. The "Delta

Plus" took the consecutive attacks as it remained on the defensive and retreated back. (Spend some time to think…?) Riddhe's murmuring entered Banagher's ears.

"I have to understand the significance of the start of the Universal Century, and also the significance of why a country like Zeon was born! If not, I won't know how to deal with the "Box". Audrey knows this, and that's why—"

That's why she did not have hope in Neo Zeon that has such rigid views, and took a risk to prevent the people of the Foundation from handing the "Box" over to the highly influential Full Frontal. Banagher could not finish his words in time as the "Delta Plus" flew backwards and kicked the rock behind it. it leapt over the " Unicorn" head and drew its second beam saber. (If you want to know the significance, let me tell you!) The yell came, and as the " Delta Plus" wielded its two beam sabers as it closed in, Banagher let the "Unicorn" wield two beam sabers to take on the incoming opponent.

(Zeon is the tumor born from twisted idealism of the Space Migration Issues. This Newtype thinking is just a fantasy they have, and a virus that divided humanity into two after humanity nearly united. If we don't eradicate them, there won't be peace…!)

"Is peace built upon that sort of sacrifice real peace!? There has to be a way for both sides to understand each other!"

(This is the symptom! You're the source of chaos for thinking that there are still other ways! Do you understand!?)

The 4 sets of beam sabers clashed with each other and let out flashes, creating interference waves that scattered all around. Both machines continued to slash at each other as they moved, causing the ground below them to rise as dry bits of dirt were flying about, and ionized air continued to surround these two machines.

(A single ideal allowed them to build their own influence and oppose an existing one. Their hopes of uniting tribes will only cause opposition against people who aren't willing to unite. No matter what era it is, wars are always started from irresponsible theology. It's the same for Zeon, and that Cardeas Vist who intended to open the "Box"…!)_

"No! If humanity is an existence that can only accept the reality in front of them, they should be wiped out a long time ago. It's human nature to oppose irrationality and advance forward as much as possible, right!? You're just being crushed by your own despair!"

The leg strength of the frame and the thruster jet power assisted each other as the "Unicorn" leapt vertically to dodge the horizontal slash and landed behind the "Delta Plus". Banagher predicted that Riddhe would panic and turn back, and let his crouching machine raise the beam saber in its right hand to strike up. The melting sound of metal entered the machine, and the right hand of the "Delta Plus" was melted together with its beam saber as it passed by the edge of his sights.

(Banagher…!)

"You're saying the same things as the people of the Vist Foundation, Ensign Riddhe. You courageously brought Audrey back to Earth, so why…!"

(That Riddhe Marcenas is dead.)

The “Delta Plus” covered its right hand that was sliced off as it took a step backwards and looked over at Banagher. The hideous voice caused Banagher’s to feel fearful as he stopped attacking temporarily.

(I don’t have the power to save the world. Even if order is incomplete here, I’ll protect it if there’s no way to protect it. That way, I can protect Mineva too…!)

The “Delta Plus” did not let go of this chance as it let the remaining left hand raise its beam saber and charge at the “ Unicorn”. Banagher, who was overwhelmed by this pressure, had his body tensed up as he reacted too late at that moment, and bit his lips upon realizing that it was too late. Sparks appeared in front of his eyes, and once the shield deployed automatically in front of him, the expanding smoke of the explosions covered the “ Delta Plus”.

The “Delta Plus” was definitely rendered unsteady by the pressure of the explosion, but it swung the beam saber down without hesitation, clearing the black smoke in front of him. Banagher let the “Unicorn” dodge to the right, and then saw two missiles enter the ground. The missiles from the air triggered another flame of explosion, and the ”Delta Plus” twist its body as it retreated back. It looked down at the “Unicorn” through the rising smoke column, showed a vicious defiant glare from the eyes under its visor, and turned away to leave.

The humanoid that leapt from the barren land instantly transformed into a wave rider and entered the clouds. *If I let him go like this, he’ll really become an enemy.* Banagher was driven by the

anxiety in him, “Mr Riddhe, wait…!” and called out. (Are you alright, Banagher?) however, upon hearing this call from Zinnerman, he looked back at the sky again, and spotted the homebase-shaped machine of the “DO-DAI Kai” approach him.

The machine seemed to have used up its remaining missiles, and it went by the top of the “Unicorn” before lowering its height and closing in. “Captain, Audrey’s…!” Banagher called out, (I understand, we’ll go after her immediately.) but Zinnerman seemed to be ready for this as his voice rang through the wireless communicator, causing Banagher to lose his thoughts on Riddhe. He deactivated the beamsabers, let the machine leap up, and lit the thrusters to maximum power. The “Unicorn” rose for 200m as it dragged a trail of thruster flare, and landed on the “DO-DAI Kai” that glided by from below.

The “DO-DAI Kai” took the weight of the machine as it shook suddenly, and started to rise again. (Are you tracking their course, Flaste? Follow them!) Banagher heard Zinnerman’s growl from the wireless communicator, and started to check on the “Unicorn” damages. A little part of the armor was damaged, but the movable armor was not damaged at all. However, Banagher’s body itself was at its limit, as he was already panting heavily despite not using his body to fight, and his shoulders could not stop rising and falling as he breathed.

He removed the visor of the helmet and took in fresh air. After wiping the sweat off his face, he looked down at the ground that was moving further away from him. It seemed that the battle in the base had already ended, and the body of the “Ra Cailum” was covered in black smoke all over. There should be some SFS other

than the "DO-DAI Kai" inside the ship, but there were no signs of pursuers. He could not confirm the safety of the Zeon mobile suits that retreated as there was a devastation of a battle roaming under the cloudy sky, whether it was the barracks that was reduced to a pile of rubble, or the numerous mobile suit scraps that were burnt red hot and lying around.

Wars are always started from irresponsible theology. If Cardeas never intended on opening the "Box", this incident would never have happened. Before I realized it, I'm already helping to carry out father's plans. Am I really bound by a curse like what Alberto said? Banagher suddenly had this thought, and felt a chill on his body as he turned away and looked down at the "Ra Cailum" that was giving off black smoke.

Individually, we are helpless, but individual wills united together can also drag the world from the dark abyss.—he put the sight of the ship moving further away with the worlds Captain Bright said, and turned his sights forward. No matter whether those words were a reality or a prayer to comfort the pains of reality, he could only believe in his. He could only believe that doing this could overturn the situation in a certain way, bring about a strength that would overcome the lack of logic, and allow himself to proceed forward. Once he felt that everyone would understand this, he put his hand on his throbbing chest. *No matter whether it's Cardeas, Daguza, Loni, Audrey, or Marida, or even Riddhe, they all understand…*

The machine rumbled as it charged into the clouds. The mist passed through the perimeter of the all-view monitor, and the white that showed nothing else covered the "Unicorn". Banagher spotted the altitude meter that continued to increase in value after 5000m height, and continued to look at the thick clouds that were

stacked upon each other. The white blank hurling itself at the machine gradually decreased in thickness. Once a bright blue color appeared in the gaps of the mist, his field of vision was suddenly expanded wide, and shown all over the all-view monitor.

This end, a place that was reached after passing through the clouds, was the blue sky linking to the distant space—however, he did not see the glaring sun, and that was because there was a large object floating above the “Unicorn” and the “DO-DAI Kai”. The sunlight that should be shining on the machines was covered blocked off completely.

The large body had two long wings that were expanded to the side, and from its profile, it certainly looked like a transport carrier . However, it was still too large to be classified as a large transport carrier. The object in front of his sight was no less than 300m long, and the width of the wings could be more than 500m. The wings that were at least 10m thick were dragging numerous jet clouds, and that dark grey colored base that flew in the sky was practically a giant castle floating in the sky. The round disc-shaped objects flying around it were probably transformable mobile suits, but no matter what, they looked like specks of sesame with such a large object in the background.

“This is…?”

“The “Garuda”.”

Zinnerman suppressed the trembling in his voice as he said. (That's a mobile suit base in the sky, and also the launch center of a space shuttle. It's called the largest aircraft in human history…no, I suppose we should call it an air fortress.)

The clouds were swallowed by the shadow of the base, and moved above the "DO-DAI Kai" head. The "Garuda", which had shuttles below its wings, was gradually rising up. Banagher stared at that large machine that practically occupied his eyes, and from what he could see alone, there were 6 mega particle cannons out of countless others that were scattered everywhere. It was impossible to think that the anti-air machine guns, most probably hidden by the shutters, would amount to a few. There were 20 engines protruding out from the wings, and many nozzles inside. To the " Garuda", a height of 6000m was already low altitude, and one could see from the underutilization of the engines that it could rise even higher. It was definitely launched into the stratosphere by making use of shuttles to negate the air resistance.

Audrey's over there. Banagher encouraged his heart that was seemingly overwhelmed by it as he stared at the weird bird above him. The "Garuda" showed no care about the "Unicorn", waiting for a chance to approach, as it forced back the atmosphere with its large mass, breaking its large body away from the surrounding sea of clouds.

Chapter 3

Part 1

The sea of clouds expanded below their eyes to the distant horizon, laying a blanket on the land 6000m below. The continent of Australia was already far behind, and at this point, the " Garencieres" should be reaching the skies above the New Caledonia Islands, but it was impossible to see the landscape and the horizon from this place. On looking over, the carpet of clouds was laid around, showing a clear divide with the sky.

The “Garuda” overlooked the sea of clouds as it gradually rose in height. That was the largest aircraft made in the history of humanity, and even at close to 50km, there were other machines that could be clearly identified. Draped in the background The escort crafts were sesame seeds in comparison to the ship itself, a massive object about in a carefree manner that was like a monster pelican flying, with the clouds draped over it—Flaste stared at the scene on the enlarged window, which caused him to forget the sense of scale, and just when he clicked his tongue, the expanded window had noise on it, and pink flashes covered the window.

The beams grazed past the ship and entered through the clouds, causing the “Garencieres”, which just floated out from the clouds, to be shaken. After a short pause, a thunderclap-like rumble rocked the bright, “EVADE!” Flaste yelled with a voice no softer than the alarm. Alec, on the steering seat, tried his hardest to turn the rotor, and the horizontal G-force struck the ship that was meandering around. Flaste caught sight of the “Garuda” that was continuously firing its beams with his naked eyes, felt a chill from the multiple shots, and turned his stare to the ship’s damage control monitor. They were not shot through by a beam, but the external armor was hit by the scattered particles, activating the warning lights as a result. (Flaste! Bring the ship closer to the “ Garuda”!) Ivan’s holler could be heard from the wireless communicator, but the voice was partially drowned out by the sound of the mega-particle bombardments.

(At this distance, our beams are basically out of range. Turn the ship to the “Garuda” and lower us down!)

"Don't kid around! You're asking us to charge right at their shots and their transformable mobile suit guards!"

Alec sputtered out saliva as he lashed out and glared at Ivan's " Geara Zulu". The "Garencieres" had managed to fly in at an extremely low height to Torrington Base to pick up Ivan's "Geara Zulu" successfully. At this point, this mobile suit was poking half its body out from the upper deck of the "Garencieres", and was acting as the only cannon on this unarmed, disguised trading ship that could defend. Kwani's "Geara Zulu" was also picked up, but it lost an arm and was having emergency repairs. There was no news on the "Zee Zulu" which met up with them after the Battle of Dakar, and they had already lost contact with Commander Kirks' " Zaku I" for quite some time. As for the other random machines that joined the raid from the Shinbu Base, the "Garencieres" had no means of confirming whether they had escaped or not.

Ivan's unit wielded the beam machine gun to get ready as he stared at the "Garuda", looking like he could start an attack anytime soon; however, its thick green armor took quite a bit of damage. (Then what else can we do!?) In the face of this arguing, Flaste bit his lips and swallowed the term 'cornered' into his heart.

(The Princess is definitely on the "Garuda"—)

A flash appeared again, and the noise appeared, drowning out the wireless communicator. The flash was brighter than the sunlight as it dyed the bridge, and a turbulence-like tremor struck the "Garencieres". Flaste glanced aside, spotted Alec lowering the height of the ship to the clouds, and brought the microphone of the wireless communicator to his hand. He was terrified by the

thunderous applause of the high heat particles raining down, " THIS IS THE "GARENCIERES" CALLING THE CAPTAIN!" but he still hollered out.

"The enemy's fire is too thick, and we can't approach it. it might be better to find another chance. Since we got the brat and the " Unicorn", we can use them as a bargaining chip—"

(No, follow us outside the "Garuda" range. If we retreat now, we'll be letting down the Shinbu squad people.)

Upon hearing the strong emphasis amidst the noise, whatever Flaste wanted to say vanished afterwards. Whenever Zinnerman started to speak with such a tone, it indicated that he would not be moved in the slightest. Flaste stared at the "Garuda" in the enlarged window, looked for the "DO-DAI Kai" mixed in with the patrol units, "What do you intend to do?" and growled. (Get onto the "Garuda"). Zinnerman's words came together with the chaos in the speakers, and Flaste could not exhale any of the breath he gasped.

(I'll bring the "DO-DAI" as close as possible and land on it by rappelling. As long as I can get inside, the situation will basically be in our control.)

"How are you going to go in? You'll be shot through many times before you can even get close, right?"

(I'll find a way. Once I rescue the Princess, I'll send a signal to you, so don't miss it. Get ready to retrieve me.)

A second passed after the wireless communicator was interrupted, and the machines surrounding the "Garuda" immediately scattered as they started firing their machine guns at the large machine. The "DO-DAI Kai' and the "Unicorn" riding on it had most probably started to take action, as the sesame-like machines that were hard to identify were seemingly dancing around the large object like bees, confusing them. "Wha…what do we do…" Alec let out a doubtful voice, but Flaste argued back with momentum, "What else can we do!" and activated the wireless communicator with Ivan's unit. "It's good even if we're out of range. Just fire randomly to attract the enemy's attention." He commanded and turned his sights back to the expanded window again.

The "Garuda" continued to fire in all directions, and the patrolling units charged forward like bees, seemingly wanting to protect the ship. Flaste understood upon seeing the machine infected by Zinnerman's stubbornness that it would be pointless to tell him logical, to fall back once things were alright. He made his resolve as he looked back at the "Unicorn" that would get involved in all sorts of misfortune once it got involved, and then grumbled a few words at the wireless communicator that was cut off.

"Good grief, at least think of your own age…!"

Part 2

The beam machine gun had a lag in between its shots that were shot out from the "Garencieres". However, due to the humidity in the atmosphere, the beams that were sweeping through had

mostly lost their power, but their glows were still enough to cause someone to tense up.

The transformable mobile suit opened its legs from the disc-shaped platform and stopped abruptly to evade the beam shots. The other transformable mobile suits in the squadron followed suit; and upon seeing that there was a slight gap in the navigation route, "Charge in!" Zinnerman commanded Besson on the pilot seat.

The thrusters of "DO-DAI Kai" lit up, and the flat machine of the "Unicorn" immediately accelerated. Zinnerman felt a little intimidated as he saw the large shadow of the "Garuda" close in upon him gradually. From up close, the belly of the giant machine looked like a giant wall floating in the air. Also, it was set with numerous anti-air guns and could rip apart the winds that were flowing at 0.8 Mach.

There was no need for this mobile suit mothership to land other than the periodic maintenance, and it could revolve around Earth practically permanently—*Princess Mineva is inside there*. He however continued to think about this, feeling that this could calm his timid heart, and zipped up the fastener of the pilot suit he got from inside the unit. Once he put on the Federation helmet and latched on the attachments around it and the neck, he told Besson, "Follow it." The "DO-DAI Kai" crossed through the crossing fire and got right below the "Garuda". As it was about to spin suddenly, Zinnerman looked over at the transport carrier that was docked at the rear cargo deck hatch. The "Garuda" was extremely

large, but it seemed that it was unable to keep the old Medea-type model from Torrington Base, which was why the latter opened its hatch as steps and stopped there temporarily.

Has the Princess boarded the "Garuda"? Zinnerman stared at the Medea that was being held down by numerous cables, looked into the inside of the hatch that was vaguely shown, and summoned the data values of the Garuda-class onto the console monitor. There were 6 such large fleets in the Earth Defense Perimeter, and whenever a situation arose, they could immediately send mobile suits to take it on; this state of defense was the concept behind the Garuda. However, the distractions after the war had already reduced the fleets by half, and the "Garuda" in front of them, a precedent of its class, was definitely one of the surviving few ships . The ship had been modified and modified over and over again until it was called an air fortress, and the structure was no different from the old Garuda-class. Zinnerman could roughly deduce the internal workings of the ship, from the blueprints of the takeoff and landing. As long as they could enter, there was a chance that they could succeed—

"Listen up, Banagher. Once we get onto it, the "DO-DAI Kai" will be controlled by you. Just attack the "Garuda" and make them lower the altitude. We'll use this chance to get the Princess back."

He sent the data of the Garuda-class to the "Unicorn", and gave the instructions through the wireless communicator in the contact loop. It seemed that Banagher's insistence to save Mineva was just like his, (I can do it) as there was a calm force in his voice.

(But what will do you when we're escaping?)

"Once the altitude falls below 2000m, we won't have to use gas masks when parachuting. No matter how big it is, it's still a plane. When it's punctured everywhere, it'll have to lower its height to maintain the internal air pressure. As long as we follow this plan, they won't even be able to launch the space shuttle."

The space shuttle was dangling on the bottom of the "Garuda" right wing. It was a medium-sized space shuttle that could ferry 2 mobile suits, and inclusive of the thrusters, its length should be about 50m. However, it looked like a mini-missile from how it was dangling under the wing. If they allow the "Garuda" to reach the stratosphere, the space shuttle ferrying Mineva would be launched into space, and everything would be for naught—the "DO-DAI Kai" went by the back of the "Garuda" and lowered itself into the clouds. At this moment, "We're going!" Zinnerman aimed for this timing and shouted.

"Fly above the "Garuda" and get rid of the beam cannons. There are 4 we can aim at right at the top—"

(Let me pilot it!)

The interrupting voice ruptured Zinnerman's ears as the machine suddenly turned to the side, causing him to be nearly shaken out from the assistant pilot seat. The thick beams grazed the side of the "DO-DAI Kai", and the scattered beam particles that came in scorched the compartment. The fire did not come from the "Garuda", but from somewhere else. Zinnerman grabbed onto the console and scanned his eyes around at the sea of clouds that was not overly visible. He could see a black machine showing

itself through the gaps between the clouds; it was crouched on a round-shaped transformable mobile suit, the beam rifle in its hand was pointed at the “DO-DAI Kai”, and it disappeared amidst the clouds before it could be identified.

The “DO-DAI Kai” piloted by the “Unicorn” started to make an emergency turn, and the latter fired its beam Gatling guns, releasing trails of shots that were absorbed in the clouds. It seemed that an enemy unit had gotten behind the “Unicorn” as there was a mega-particle shot, brighter than the machine gun shots, which went by the head of the “Unicorn”. The “DO-DAI Kai” showed a brilliant light as it staggered greatly, and fell by 100m or so. Banagher immediately adjusted himself to let the machine rise, but Zinnerman tried all he could do to control the track the enemy through the thruster flares. He waited for the targeting screen of the Vulcan guns located on the sides of the machine, and immediately pressed the button the moment the black enemy unit crossed by.

“Fall!”

The anti-mobile suit 60mm Vulcan cannons let out a low buzz, and let out a tracer round for every five shots as it let out a slightly green trail of light in the middle of the clouds. Zinnerman’s eyes however did not let go of the black enemy machine that was dodging swiftly as he only cared about pressing the trigger. (No!) However, Banagher’s call caused him to widen his eyes in a startled manner, and at the same time, the “DO-DAI Kai” lifted its bow as the Vulcan cannons lost their target and let out a blank trail of fire.

"Banagher…!?"

(You're attacking Miss Marida! She's on it!)

Zinnerman's heart jumped for a moment, only to stop seemingly. "What did you say…?" he asked as he squeezed out this voice, and started to look for the enemy unit that flashed by from the bottom. The pitch black machine raised the angle of the transformable mobile suit it was riding on, and turned upwards as a savage light lit the golden horn on its forehead. The black " Unicorn" was showing intense hatred within its eyes, and as it wielded its beam rifle with one hand, it charged over without hesitation.

Marida. Zinnerman muttered this name in his heart, and at that moment, as he turned aside to look, the sound of the scattered particles rang in his ears. The pair of azure blue eyes that had been serving him, that had been looking back at him, were wiped out by the flash, and a sense of pressure heavier than the G-force was lambasting his heart and body.

Part 3

The "Unicorn" dodged the attack from the Beam Magnum, and after that, the "Garuda" rained down a torrent of fire as it awaited the "Unicorn" that was moving through the clouds; Banagher used the shield to block the machine gun shots he could not avoid, and intended to escape from the shooting range of the giant ship above him, but the killing intent from right below caused him to turn the "DO-DAI Kai" diagonally.

The beam of the Beam Magnum grazed the "DO-DAI Kai" abdomen that was tilted almost 90 degrees, and the intense ray of light passed through the clouds and surged upwards, grazing by the wing of the "Garuda" as it created a pillar of light reaching the skies. The "Banshee", riding on the disc-shaped transformable mobile suit—the RAS-96 Anksha" immediately dashed out of the clouds and raised its beam rifle to attack. The "DO-DAI Kai" was spinning around as it was flipped by the shockwaves, and at that moment, the "Banshee" managed to go up high and arrived at a position where it could look down at the "Unicorn" with the sun behind it.

"Miss Marida!"

The glowing eyes under the sharp golden horn overlapped with the deep blue eyes that had all emotions removed. Banagher clicked his tongue as he used the Beam Gatling guns to fire a suppressing attack, and dodged the beam magnums as it moved up, out from the clouds. "If you can't hear me…!" he muttered as he drew the beam saber from the side rack of his right shoulder, and then threw it at the "Banshee" following it. The beam saber continued to reverb as it cut through the sky like a flying dagger, attacking the "Banshee" directly.

The black machine managed to use its shield to deflect the flying dagger, but it was rendered unsteady as it swayed about; Banagher did not let go of this chance as he stepped on the pedal and let the "Unicorn" leap up from the "DO-DAI Kai". It jumped backwards by using the rising air current, and charged at the "

Banshee" at a velocity near supersonic. The black machine was chased off the "Anksha", and ended up clashing in limbo with the "Unicorn" for a moment before it started to fall down

"Miss Marida! It's me, Banagher!"

Banagher let the two mobile suits cling onto each other closely as they scuffled and called in through the communication circuit. The altitude meter continued to fall, and at this moment, the " Banshee" tilted its head slightly and turned the eyes under its visor at the "Unicorn".

"The Captain's on board too. You remember Captain Zinnerman from the "Garencieres", right? He's your original master."

The "DO-DAI Kai" lowered itself at a breakneck speed and got down to the two mobile suits' feet. Banagher restrained the " Banshee" from escaping and lit its verniers to turn its trajectory to the direction where the "DO-DAI Kai" was falling.

The thrusters let out an exhaust before they machine contact, and the machine negated its falling speed as it landed on the " DO-DAI Kai". The "DO-DAI Kai" took the weight of both machines as it glided down hard, and the "Banshee" used this opportunity to grab the "Unicorn", which released its arms due to the impact. However, the "Unicorn" restrained the "Banshee" that was intending to lunge back, and restrained it onto the platform. " Please wake up!" Banagher shouted with all he had.

"You two used to trust each other that much, and supported each other. I definitely won't let you become the Captain's enemy! That's because you're—"

(Ple Twelve. My master is Alberto Vist.)

The cold voice entered the cockpit through the contact loop. The pitch black armor let out a golden glow from between its gap, and as the eyes lit up to look back at Banagher, the "Banshee" swung its arms to push the "Unicorn" aside.

"Marida…!?"

(Master said before that it's alright to ensure the cockpit and the pilot. I'll wreck the machine if you resist.)

The "Banshee" grabbed the "Unicorn" by its visor and pushed it down onto the platform. The beam saber on its right arm was activated afterwards, and a beam that was partially subdued in power shot out, forming a scalpel that was at the "Unicorn" neck—the place that was the equivalent of the human carotid pulse that drives the system.

Marida, no the "Banshee" knew that it had a similar body structure as the "Unicorn". Banagher could not chase off the black machine riding on him with the beam saber as his vital regions, and gritted his teeth. At this moment, (Marida…) he heard another voice come in. it seemed that the "Banshee" received the same voice through the contact loop as it lowered its arm in a doubtful manner.

(You're really Marida, right? Can you hear me?)

The voice came from the control seat of the "DO-DAI Kai", and the questioner sounded cautious, as if he was touching a tumor, but there was an indomitable will in his tone. This voice caused the two Unicorn-type mobile suits on the platform to tremble slightly, but after a short moment of stillness, the "Banshee" immediately turned its beam saber at the "Unicorn". (Those guys from the Foundation readjusted you, right?) Zinnerman's voice this time did cause the black machine to freeze.

(But it's alright. They won't be able to do surgery on you in such a short time. You're just confused by the drugs and the brainwashing.)

(What exactly, are you saying…?)

There was clearly a wavering voice from the emotionless black machine. (Pull yourself through, Marida?) Zinnerman continued to call out, and the head of the "Banshee" looked like it was unable to steady itself as it looked left and right, ostensibly trying to look for the owner of the voice.

(Ple Twelve is just a codename. You now have a proper name. Think of the meaning of the name Marida.)

The "Banshee" lost the killing intent in its eyes, (Meaning… name…) and a murmuring could be heard muttered. (Only you and I know the significance of this name.) Zinnerman emphasized, and Banagher tried to see the blue eyes in his memories together with the eyes in front of him. During the moment when he was

restrained on the “Ra Cailum”, Banagher once spotted some sort of light in her eyes. If that was her actual will, that meant that she—the latter half of the words did not form in Banagher’s heart however as he held his breath to wait for the “Banshee” reaction for several seconds. He suddenly glimpsed at other machines from past the black shoulder, and the moment of silence was forcefully interrupted.

The “Unicorn” did not wait for Banagher’s body to respond as it sensed danger and raised its Beam Gatling guns to fire. The approaching machine suddenly spun around, and the scatted parts of the disc-shaped machine were covered by the veil of water vapor. However, the machine was not blown to pieces, and the armor that formed the round disc opened upwards as it proceeds to cover the shoulder and forearm. The thruster units below the machine were turned 90 degrees, and once the mobile suit showed its lower body and legs, the goggles of its traditional Federation face stared right at the “Unicorn”.

“A mobile suit…!?”

The “Anksha” had both the beam cannons equipped on its arms , and was ripping through the water vapor as it closed in fast. The mega-particle bullets aimed at each other crossed through the clouds, and the “DO-DAI Kai”, which swayed about as the beams grazed it, lost its balance as it tumbled like a fallen leaf. Banagher let the “Unicorn” steady its feet onto the platform to prevent himself from falling in this battle, and could see the “Banshee” escaping in the sky. He witnessed his opponent use the wind

pressure blowing upon its shields to negate the falling speed, skillfully adjusted its balance, and nimbly landed on the “Anksha” that transofmred into a round disc again.

They finally managed to get through to each other somehow. Banagher grumbled in his heart as he let the machine grab onto the grip of the “DO-DAI Kai” and got down to track the “Banshee” below. (Marida—!) Zinnerman’s agonized cry rang, and the “ Banshee” gave a glare after regaining the killing intent it had. (It’s really your style to attack me while I’m confused, you despicable people…!) Marida exclaimed as her words stung Banagher’s eardrums.

“No! I was just—”

(Shut up! The “Gundam” is my enemy!)

The shout faded far away, and the block of energy from the Beam Magnum caused the clouds to scattered. The beam reached out to the sky, missing the “Unicorn” as it blew a hole in the sea of clouds. Banagher immediately felt a chill in it. The “Garuda” was right above, but she did not care when she attacked. She had no thoughts about working together with the defense forces, and what she gave was just her hatred against the “Unicorn”. She aimed at the “DO-DAI Kai” that was dodging around and fired a second shot without hesitation. Banagher raised his height to check the location of the “Garuda”, and his vision was covered by the mega-particles that flew in, “Don’t fire! Miss Marida!” as he raised his voice.

“Audrey’s on the “Garuda”. Princess Mineva is on board!”

There was no response, and what came in through the wireless communicator was the chaotic noise that seemed to have infected Marida. A third beam chased the "Unicorn" as it passed through the clouds, and Banagher was forced to fire a screen of shots to hold off his opponent. The mega-particle shot that was as powerful as a battleship cannon raced through the blue eye, and the beam grazed the straightened rear wing of the "Garuda", causing the weird bird with its wings spread 500m wide to tremble.

Part 4

A sharp painful impact rocked the floor, causing the tremors to rise up to the ceiling above. Mineva grabbed onto the extendable pole of the gondola to support her body that was about to fall, and after a moment, a white light covered her sights, causing her to close her eyes inadvertently. A thunderclap-like boom followed suit, and the wind flowing into the deck paused for a while. She opened her eyes forcefully, turned around, and spotted the mobile suits riding on the DO-DAI SFS.

The mobile suit deck of this "Garuda" was far bigger than the " Ra Cailum" in terms of specifications. It was 60m wide, 200m long, and over 30m in height. The rear cargo deck hatch that functioned as an entrance was as big, but currently, the two thick doors were opened vertically, and the Medea transport carrier could be seen resting at the bottom hatch linking to the deck.

In the end, the large transport carrier that flew in from Torrington Base was being held in by the restrains and the numerous wires on the tail of the "Garuda", and the machine that

had a 70m wingspan was mostly exposed in the sky. The mobile suit riding on the SFS was right beside the Medea, crossing through the sky behind for only a moment, but Mineva could already see the clear image of the "Unicorn" machine in her eyes. The white machine was chased off by the "Banshee" that appeared afterwards, before disappearing diagonally above, and an explosion expanded again, shaking the empty deck.

The Medea machine was starting to lose its shape because of the refracted light, and the external air of 6000m was flowing in from outside the hatch. The air barrier from within was allowing the deck to maintain standard pressure, but the strong winds that were bellowing freezing point still felt chilly. Mineva zipped up the front of her flight jumper, looking for the two Unicorn-type mobile suits in the middle of the void. She was taken in just a little more than 10 minutes ago, and a battle began again, causing everyone to wait on the unsheltered deck for their own doom. The black-clothed subordinates of the Vist Foundation were standing around, looking outside the hatch with pale faces as they watched how the battle developed. The mechanics were all charging over ferociously, and the important personnel of the "Garuda" did not come out to meet them, probably because they intended to let the Foundation people get onto the shuttle directly, or that the unexpected battle caused them to panic. As Mineva wondered about this, a mega-particle beam caused a thunderous boom outside. "Can't we close the hatch?" Martha asked anxiously. A black-clothed subordinate immediately brought his face to the wireless communicator.

"How long are you going to keep the hatch opened!? Hurry up and move the transport carrier away!"

(Who's the idiot there? How can we let a transport carrier head to its death in the midst of an aerial battle! If you're a guest, go straight to the shuttle launch deck and standby!)

The target of this call through the wireless communicator was from the commander of the "Garuda", most likely stuck in the flight deck. The Medea could not increase in height, and could not launch into space. He was in fact the most anxious as he could not find a way to chase off the troublesome customers. "If the stray shots hit the shuttle, what do we do? We can't possibly remain alive in the launch deck, right?" The subordinate started to argue back, but an umpteenth boom deafened the ears again as the largest impact up till this point rocked the "Garuda". A horrifyingly weird sound rang from the empty deck supported by a large number of steel frames, and the wires supporting the Medea were at their limit. "The beam just went by us?" "Did the " Banshee" fire?" Martha glanced aside at her subordinates who in an uproar, "How's the situation?" and coldly turned her eyes to the man in white clothes.

"There're irregularities on the specimen's brainwaves. At the rate this keeps up, the hypnosis will likely weaken. I suppose it'll be better for her to retreat first…"

The man stood in front of the observation monitor, and turned his balding head at Martha as he made this reply tentatively. Alberto, who boarded the "Garuda" a little later, was standing beside the old man who seemed to be the facility head of the Newtype Research Institute, but he had been staring at the monitor of the observation installation up till this point, and did

not seem to care about the surrounding buzz. Martha turned her stare to him and coldly stated, "Alberto, you're her master, you know." Alberto's pudgy shoulders shuddered slightly, and he turned his anxious face at Martha.

"Only the "Banshee" can restrain the "Unicorn". Think of something. Does it not matter that you'll lose to your younger brother?"

Little brother. This dissonant yet ever-realistic term was etched within Mineva's ears, and she looked over at Alberto. He, who was at a loss of words, looked away from Martha, and his face certainly looked similar to Cardeas Vist in some ways. *Is he*…Mineva thought as she continued to look over at Alberto, who turned his back on her and looked at the monitor on the observation installation. He picked up the wireless communicator and spoke, " Ple Twelve, it's me, master. Do you hear me?" His calling voice however sounded really weak in the midst of the raging winds.

"Just listen to everything I say. Every other message is a trick by the enemy to confuse you. Listen, I want you to capture the " Unicorn" and bring it here. That guy's the "Gundam", the enemy that robbed the "light" from you. As long as you can bring it over, your "light" won't be taken away."

The "light" that was taken away. The significance in that term, that ominous feeling stabbed into Mineva's chest, causing her to feel goosebumps.

Is that the restraining bolt on Marida? Is that the driving force that forces her to charge into the battlefield emotionally? If that's the case,

what's driving Marida now isn't hatred for the enemy, but self-guilt. This thought will normally lead to destruction at the end, including herself. She's just focusing her self-destructive thoughts on the keyword "Gundam", and she's not even controlled by the master— Mineva continued to look at Alberto, who was yelling into the wireless communicator, felt a sense of guilt from that back, and intended to walk forward before she suddenly stopped. Two black clothed subordinates blocked her path, and from past their shoulders, she could see the white slender face of Martha looking back at her.

It's useless. The grin that showed these words spread to the side. She did not know about the buttons they pressed, and would probably only blame Marida's abnormality on a system malfunction. Things were unlikely to change even if Mineva were to explain it, and she could only avert her stare to the rear hatch. It seemed that the "Unicorn" and the "Banshee" had already arrived over the head of the "Garuda", and there were no signs of the two mobile suits outside the hatch. The transformable mobile suit called the "Anksha" or something was moving about in helter-skelter, as its round disc body, unable to interfere in the battle, continued to dodge without any contribution.

There's only a hundred meters at most from here to the rear hatch, and there's no other way out. I might as well… Mineva muttered as she was driven by her impulse, and clenched her trembling fist. At this moment, she spotted a black silhouette appear in the sky, and it was quickly solidifying.

The machine that was like a fighter jet instantly got bigger and dashed past the "Anksha" squadron as it charged right at the "Garuda". It decelerated right at the back of the rear hatch, and an

explosive vapor immediately surrounded it as its fighter jet form collapsed. The machine, the “Delta Plus”, charged into the mobile suit deck; before Mineva could understand the situation, the machine that had transformed into a humanoid state ducked down the wings of the Medea transport carrier, and the loud sound of the landing spread apart together with the heat waves on the deck. The crewman with the command baton was shocked by the giant that suddenly appeared, and hurriedly dodged away from the hatch.

“What the!?” “Where did that mobile suit come from…?” The “ Delta Plus” did not care about the ramblings of the subordinates as the landing impact caused it to charge forward by several meters before finally stopping. The thick grey armor was dyed in burns, and even though it lost its right hand, Mineva could tell from its unedged “Gundam”-like face that this was the machine that brought her to Earth. As the black clothed subordinates surrounding Martha were retreating, Mineva harbored a certain form of premonition as she looked up at the “Delta Plus”. The cockpit at the abdomen opened, the inner hatch slid open, and just like what she expected, a familiar pilot suit appeared from inside.

“That guy actually chased us all the way here…!”

Alberto muttered seemingly to himself, but Riddhe did not seem to care about the numerous stares right at him as he stood on the lift wire beside the cockpit and landed onto the deck from the knelt “Delta Plus”. He removed his helmet visor and fixated his determined stare at Mineva only, and the latter could only look back at him from behind the black figures that immediately got in their way.

It was an unbearable moment. The way both parties made it all the way here without care for each other caused them to feel a premonition of bitterness. “Ensign Riddhe, I don’t believe that I gave the permit to land here, did I?” at this moment, Alberto stood beside Mineva, but Riddhe did not intend to stop as his continued to approach Mineva, his determined look not wavering in the slightest. Alberto pointed his chin to direct the subordinates, and as the latter intended to suppress the pilot suit, Riddhe turned his hands behind his neck. It was too late by the time the black subordinates reached their hands into their chest pockets, as he quickly pointed a handgun barrel right at Alberto.

Riddhe probably prepared some tape on the nape of his neck, and he quickly turned the handgun around to hold off the surrounding subordinates before standing approximately 2m in front of Mineva. The subordinates still had their hands in their chest pockets as they surrounded Riddhe in steps; and the latter detected their motions as he fixated his stare, in unison with the gun barrel, at Alberto. Mineva sensed that Alberto beside her took a step back as she stared at Riddhe silently. The latter was aiming his handgun with both hands, and his beige eyes merely glanced at Mineva for an instant.

“I came to get you.”

He stated his intent firmly, and turned his gun around to hold off the Foundation people. The pressurized anxiousness in his eyes proved Mineva’s premonition, and she turned her face towards Riddhe, unable to make a sound.

Part 5

The black “Unicorn” used the disc-shaped transformable mobile suit as a footing and let its large body fly in the sky. It spun its shield skillfully and adjusted its position as the winds struck at it. Once it landed on top of the “Garuda”, it reached its arms out and landed on the wide wings cleanly.

One of the machine gun turrets were wrecked, and at that moment, the black machine that landed on the wing pointed its golden horn at Banagher. The “Unicorn” leapt off the “DO-DAI Kai” platform before the opponent fired its beam rifle. Zinnerman was nearly shaken off the driver seat that was tilted greatly as the mobile suit riding on it abandoned the craft, “That idiot…!” and grabbed the console as he growled. “Let’s fall back first!” Besson shouted, “No!” but Zinnerman yelled back and looked for the “ Unicorn” in his extremely shaky vision. He could barely see the white machine land on the wing of the “Garuda”, and it charged in , dodging the cannon attack of the black machine.

Even when considering the measurements of a mobile suit, there was still enough space on the strange bird with a 500m wingspan. It was not inconvenient for both Unicorn-types were about to clash on it as it was wide enough, but the problem was that the wind pressure was flying in at 800km per hour. Banagher sensed that the 30ton machine was about to be blown aside by the wind as he let the “Unicorn” reach its hand out to Marida’s machine. The black “Unicorn” took the wind pressure, skillfully glided on the wing, and once it stopped, it let out a flare from its beam rifle. The powerful impact of the Magnum shot grazed past

the top of the “Garuda”, and the scattered particles fell down in the path, causing the wing armor to be ripped off and blown to the back. The “Unicorn” dodged, stepped onto a beam cannon, crushed it, and barely managed to let itself stop on the wing as it struggled to regain balance.

It was not weird for both sides to fall anytime soon—no, the frame of the “Garuda” would not be able to support them before that happened. Marida was obviously acting disorderly, and Banagher was gradually drawn in by her confusion. Zinnerman stared at the wing of the “Garuda” that was fluttering like a bird. *The Princess is inside there somewhere, and so in the guy who readjusted Marida and made himself the new master. He’s forcing her to fight, the one who’s causing her pain.*

“…Match the relative velocity of the “Garuda” and let the machine land on the gun turret.”

There’s no other way. Zinnerman pointed at the machine gun turret Marida’s unit wrecked as he gave this order. “But if the “ Unicorn” isn’t here, the DO-DAI control is…!” Besson argued back with bloodshot eyes. “Stay here.” But Zinnerman forcefully commanded and strapped a parachute container onto his shoulder .

“Once you let me go, drop the machine out of firing range. After 30 minutes…no, 20 minutes, if there’s still no movement, bring the “Unicorn” back to the “Garencieres”.”

He waited for the machine to land, and left the seat. “This is reckless. You’re going in alone…!?” Besson chided, but Zinnerman

turned his back on the other man as he opened the dock leading to the cargo deck. The parachute container on his back was a backpack that had equipment on the buttocks till the legs, and there was a spare parachute filled in front of his chest. He carried the heavy equipment that even the paratroopers would be amazed by, passed through the door, climbed down the ladder to the air lock, and reached the cargo deck that was right below the platform . The cargo deck filled with spare supplies looked like an underground bunker, but it could occasionally be used as an explosive depot, as there was a hatch to drop the explosives through on the floor.

Zinnerman closed the helmet visor and activated the installation to reduce the air pressure. As the machine continued to rumble, he pulled the cable from the winch beside him, and fastened the safety harness on his shoulders onto the wire firmly. Once the green light indicating zero pressure was lit up, Zinnerman pressed the release button to open the hatch. The wind that blew into the craft immediately hit the helmet, and he could see the surging clouds below.

The thick grey wings of the “Garuda” covered the white cloud carpet as it appeared in Zinnerman’s eyes. He looked over, and could see ice forming on the wings. “How reckless…” he vented his complains that would happen to him, and stepped onto the ground.

A falling feeling felt like it was going to tighten his buttocks, and the harness embedded upon his shoulders felt extremely discomforting. Zinnerman started to descend down along the rope as he was tossed by the currents flowing below the ship, his body

swaying heavily as he relied on merely a rope. The closest the " DO-DAI Kai" could get close to the "Garuda", without the interference of the wild currents, would be more than 30m. The blown hollow of the machine gun turret was so small as compared to the wide wing that filled his vision, a depressing sight at that, and he immediately felt regret.

Part 6

(Banagher, the Captain's about to land on the "Garuda"! If you can hear me, cover him!)

Besson's shout rang from amidst the noise, and Banagher's attention that was captured by the battle in front of him started to move. The heel of the "Unicorn" was firmly etched into the wing of the "Garuda", and as he let the machine stand on the engine block, he got into attack mode and swung the beam saber that was clashing with the "Banshee" forward.

The "Banshee" tried to retreat quickly as its footing was unstable as compared to the attacker. The black machine glided down the machine and stopped at the edge of the wing. Banagher witnessed this as he let the main camera line the wireless communicator signal to the other side. The "DO-DAI Kai" was trying to match its relative velocity with the "Garuda" as it flew 30m above the wing, and he could barely see a human figure dangling on the wire dropped from the "DO-DAI Kai".

It was Zinnerman. He had a large rucksack on both front and back, and his waist had a backpack on it; that pilot suit silhouette was landing towards the destroyed gun turret, but he could not

fall directly as the air currents continued to rage. His body was nearly dragged off as he could only move down diagonally, and in fact, he looked like a human flag blown by the wind. “Are you serious…?” Banagher muttered, and as he tried to let the machine turn towards the “DO-DAI Kai”, a killing intent from beside him stopped the “Unicorn” in its tracks. The “Anksha” got onto the wing, surrounded by water vapor, transformed into its humanoid form with high shoulders, and drew its beam saber as it leapt onto the “Unicorn”.

There was no room for Banagher to retreat. He went full throttle as he stepped onto the pedal and let the “Unicorn” charge forward against the wind pressure. The thrusters in the backpack were activated, and the “Unicorn” was assisted by an explosive thrust as it raced down the “Garuda”. It clashed beam sabers with the “ Anksha”, melted the latter’s right shoulder, and swung backhand as it sliced off the beam cannon on the left hand. At the next moment, a Beam Magnum light went right in front of the “Unicorn ”. The high amount of scattered particles charged right at both the “Unicorn” and the “Anksha”, and the latter, which did not have a shield, was immediately blown into blews.

The limbs of the “Anksha” rolled onto the wing of the “Garuda” limply, and the machine immediately exploded on the rear wing. The flying flames and debris were gone with the wind, and the burnt explosion dust made a black smoke trail with the help of the 20 engines. Banagher used this opportunity to deploy his I-field, and barely managed to avoid the attack of the scattered particles, but the impact from the explosion caused the “DO-DAI Kai” in his sights to sway. The machine dropped down greatly, and Zinnerman, who was descending, landed hard on the wing; in an

instant, his profile was mixed in with the debris that was blown away.

"Captain!"

The "Unicorn" stepped off the wing surface as it lit its thrusters and charged at the silhouette. The wire was snapped, and Zinnerman's body rolled down many meters. His hand managed to grab onto the wing rectifier for merely a moment, as the strong winds instantly blew him to the edge of the wing. He flew right by the nose of the "Unicorn" with its outstretched hand, and Banagher immediately chased after the other man who was thrown into the empty sky as he let the "Unicorn" leap out of the wing. Banagher used this momentum of the wind to let the " Unicorn" grab the man that was blown away by the wing.

At the same time, he lit all his thrusters to veer the machine. The "Unicorn" twisted itself in the empty sky, letting out a trail of thruster flare moving forward, and landed back on the edge of the "Garuda" wing. It rolled onto the side of the vertical rear wing and knelt down; upon this, Banagher checked that Zinnerman in his hands was safe. The body wearing the Federation pilot suit moved slightly, and the face under the helmet turned towards him as Zinnerman raised his hand gingerly to give a thumbs up to the main camera.

It seemed that the parachutes on both front and back sides worked as an air cushion, preventing a fatal injury. (Behind you, Banagher!) just when Banagher was feeling relieved, a voice came in through the contact loop, and he immediately diverted the " Unicorn" away. The beam saber that was swung over from the

back went by the bottom of the armpit, and the blade ripped the surface of the "Garuda" wing as the backhand strike was launched up at the "Unicorn".

The "Unicorn" barely managed to dodge at the last moment, and the "Banshee" did not let go of this chance as it swung its beam saber down. Banagher used his shield to block this thunderous slash as he pulled the right hand with Zinnerman on it back to its chest. The heat from the beam saber could rupture even Gundarium, and was definitely not something to be treated idly. If he were to be heat by any of the scattered particles, Zinnerman would end up no different from a target of a high-powered laser.

"Stop it, Miss Marida! The captain will burn to death if we clash like this!"

Banagher retreated back as he yelled out loud. The cold air at freezing point was scattered apart, and the scorching beam saber swung down without mercy as (STOP IT!) Marida's yell rang in his ears.

(This incessant yelling is hurting my head…! If you want me to stop, just surrender!)

"Your headache is proof that the real Miss Marida is resisting! If that's the brother unit of the "Unicorn", you would be swallowed by the machine. Aren't you the one who told me that my machine has such a terrifying system!?"

(That's ridiculous…!)

The “Banshee” swung over, and used the momentum to swing an elbow, denting the “Unicorn” shield. The machine was knocked backwards onto the ground, and the wing of the “Garuda” took the massive 30ton frame as a cavity appeared in its wing like plywood. Banagher protected Zinnerman in his hands as he immediately regrouped, but the “Banshee” leapt in from above as it reached its hand to cover his sight. The “Banshee” grabbed the “ Unicorn” by the head and plummeted it to the wing, and the reverse grip beam saber tip was pressed against the abdomen of the “Unicorn”.

“The “Banshee” will give me power. This power will burn off all the slugs on me and return me the “light” that belongs to me.”

The high heat of the beam saber caused a at the back, and a emotionless pitch black figure was swaying. “Miss Marida, you—” Banagher’s words were interrupted as the “Banshee” stared to exert strength on the beam saber it was wielding.

(Nobody can ever think of getting in my way. I’m going to cut your stomach up too…!)

A demonic glow radiated from the eyes of the machine, and the hatred from within was directed at Banagher. *I’ll be killed.* Banagher screamed within his heart. (YOU BLACK MONSTER!) another voice entered the contact loop as Zinnerman furiously got up from the palm, appearing in the side of Banagher’s vision.

(RETURN ME MARIDA!)

He yelled as he fired the rocket launcher on his shoulder. The rocket head dragged a trail of white smoke and charged from the " Unicorn" palm to the "Banshee" face, causing a little explosion in the facemask. The "Banshee" stumbled backwards, (Now, Banagher!) Zinnerman growled as his voice followed. Zinnerman abandoned the disposable rocket launcher and pointed at the gun turret on the wing, and at this moment, Banagher understood the other man's intention. It got up and punched the unmanned gun turret.

The giant fist shattered the glass in the canopy, and the gun was bent like malt candy. Banagher let the "Unicorn" uproot the gun and dropped Zinnerman's body into the large hole opened in the side wing. (I'll leave Marida to you!) the back profile exclaimed as it sled from the hand, and Banagher waited for the other man to infiltrate successfully before pulling its beam saber out and turned the back. His prediction that the enemy would attack did not come true as the "Banshee" did not attack during this moment. The black machine had its face looking down after it took the direct rocket hit, and the darkness that had wind blowing upon it was quietly huddled up, not getting up.

(…The "Gundam", is the enemy.)

The armor on the machine expanded, and the huddled black shadow expanded. "Miss Marida…!?" The "Banshee" did not respond to Banagher's call as it lifted its head that was looking down, and the exposed Psycoframe started to radiate a golden glow.

(You're the enemy that killed *us*. You're the enemy that robbed the "light" from within me. You, you're the "Gundam"…!)

The lone horn on the forehead broke into a V-shaped, and the shattered facemask slid up. The "Banshee" rose up, showing the glow of the Psycoframe, and the golden glow ostensibly showing the will of the pilot was flickering. There was no doubt that its form was a "Gundam"—as Banagher was at a loss of words, the " Banshee" in its destroy mode raised its beam saber. The killing intent mixed in with the golden glow spread all around, passing through Banagher's body as he grabbed the control sticks again.

Part 7

A loud boom sounded through the ceiling, making it seem that it was going to collapse, and the massive body of the "Garuda" swayed up and down. The siren showed no signs of ceasing its wail, and the brightness of Zinnerman's handheld explosive was not easily identified due to the lighting.

Since the battle was held on the wing, it might not be surprising to have a little tremor, but the shaking this time was different from before. *Is a "Unicorn" shot down?* He looked up and the ceiling as the dust fell, and felt a little suffocated. The numerous footsteps running down the passage made him lean his body to the wall. He took out a sub machine gun from his backpack and peeked through a slightly opened door to check the situation on the corridor. The furious rampage of footsteps closed in, "You sure you saw him?" someone's growl rang in his ears.

"Glamel of the 17th cannon said that he saw someone drop from the "DO-DAI Kai" onto the wing."

"A solo operation? He's not in freefall flight now, right?"

"Don't talk about that now. Can't we chase off those mobile suits? If we let them rampage on, even the "Garuda" can't hang on !"

BOOM. A certain knocking sound rang inside the machine, and the shaking sound faded with the footsteps. *They're all novices.* Zinnerman muttered as he stuck an explosive beside the wires on the wall, and once he was certain that there was no one on the corridor, he opened the door completely. He was in a Federation pilot suit, but his heavy equipment meant that he could not mix in with the crew. He waited for the group equipped with oxygen masks to pass by, and carried his heavy backpack as he charged out again.

He felt his feet shaking, not because of the interrupting tremors. The reason why he felt an abnormal pain in his flank was most probably due to the heavy fall he had when he landed hard on the wing. His ribs may have fractured, but the situation did not allow for him to slow down. As the two "Unicorns" continued to do damage upon the wings, the "Garuda" continued to increase in height. He had already spent approximately 3 minutes checking the internal map of the monitor sheet and running around the thick wing before finally reaching the corridor leading to the engine rooms.

Each engine room had two main engines, and there were 10 of such rooms along the wings. There were not a lot of crew members as the "Garuda" had successfully converted into automated mode, and it was impossible for the crew that totaled less than 100 to remain on standby at this place. As he had expected, there was not a single guard leading to the engine rooms. He closed in on the 5th engine room door on the inside of the left wing, took a deep breath , exhaled, and pushed aside the unlocked door panel. "Oi, didn't you hear?" Zinnerman yapped, and there was a man who seemed to be a mechanic, turning his stare around in fright.

"There's an order to evacuate this block. Tell the other crew to hurry up and leave."

He spoke in a tone only a war veteran would spoke in. "Ye… yes!" the skinny young mechanic instinctively accepted the order as he froze, and the parachute behind Zinnerman caused him to blink in bewilderment.

"But the engine rooms are completely automated. The inspectors should be in the Central Control room…"

"Very good."

Eh? The mechanic's mouth was half opened, but Zinnerman did not see his face as his fist slammed right into the other person's abdomen; and for added precaution, he added in a karate chop on the neck. He ignored the mechanic who fainted and looked around the cabin. The wing surface was acting as a large cover to protect the fusion core jet engines, and there were numerous switchboards linked to the Central Control room right below the engines. This

simplistic scene was basically no different from the air conditioning in an office building.

"Then…"

Zinnerman rummaged through the mechanic's waist for the keys and opened a cubicle. It was easy to destroy everything with the sub machine gun, but this would end up activating the backup system. He would first have to paralyze the turbine power system and lower the height of the "Garuda". If there were time after this, he wanted to destroy the mega particle control system as well and create an opening for the "Garencieres" to approach. He considered that he would need to spend quite the effort in saving Mineva, and could not stay here for too long. He pulled out the lead wires of the heat circulation system and cut off 3 of the 5 wires.

Once he was certain that the alarm was lit, he switched off the control valve. The large engines above started to slow down drastically, and the alarm got relatively louder as it rang in his eyes.

Part 8

The sounds of the machines became a Figured Bass shook the air of the mobile suit deck, and suddenly, there was an irregular sound. Mineva felt her body float up seemingly and looked back at the opened hatch.

She could slightly see the clouds below her eyes from past the Medea transport craft. Before this, the scenery outside the aircraft

was hidden by the hatch and could not be seen. *Are we falling?* as she felt puzzled, a crewman shouted, "5th main unit, both engines down!" and hurried footsteps could be heard from above.

"I heard that there's no external damage. It's not a power system malfunction?"

"There's a problem with the 4th unit too. Call anyone that's free to head to the engine room!"

The crewmen panicked as they notified each other and ran over the catwalk along the wall. *There was a commotion over a report that someone may have snuck in just now. Is it…* the moment she thought about it, Mineva looked up at the ceiling far away from the wall. "I can hand you Banagher and the "Unicorn", but this determined voice caused her to turn to the front in shock.

"But I want her back. If you refuse, I'm going try and get her back with all I have."

Riddhe aimed his automatic handgun with both hands as he took a step forward. Alberto, who had lost out in terms of willpower, started to back away, and the surrounding black suit subordinates had their hands reached within their chest pockets, but their hands were trembling. In this extremely tense situation, Martha was the only one who showed an emotionless and undeterred expression. "Do you understand your situation here, Ensign Riddhe?" Martha did not move forward nor backwards in the face of the black suit barricade, and even showed a light sneer, but Riddhe's helmeted head shook slightly.

"We're in a battle here. Even the prince of the Marcenas' family won't be able to escape the fate of an accidental death. Who else will know that you're dead other than you yourself?"

Thud. The black subordinates let out this sound as they closed the perimeter. However, Riddhe remained unmoved by Mineva's urge to shout out as he remained calm and turned his stare and the gunpoint at Martha, "The military certainly fusses over the cause of death over anything else." He said as he gave a stiff smile.

"Everything I said will be recorded in the black box of the " Delta Plus"through the wireless communicator. Let me tell you first, it's useless to finish me off with the machine. When the machine's about to be wrecked, the system is set that the information will reach the nearest ally machine."

A subordinate whispered something to Martha, and the sneer immediately vanished from her face. Mineva deduced that he probably told her that Riddhe was not bluffing. If they were to kill Riddhe here, the "Garuda" and all the surrounding mobile suits would become witnesses. At this point, she finally realized the intention Riddhe had when he barged in here, and turned to look at his tense face again. "You have two choices." He pressured on as the flashes and boom of the mega-particles shook the atmosphere.

"Do you hand her over to me obediently? Or do you kill me and become an enemy of the Settlement Issues Council? I don't care what you choose anymore."

The muzzle was pointed decisively at Martha now, who, upon witnessing that stare full of madness, showed less than a second's worth of faltering. Her white, slender face showed a little bitterness, and she immediately showed her poker face again as she raised her hands and stopped the subordinates who would shoot anytime soon. All the subordinates removed their hands from the chest when her stare reached everyone, and Riddhe, who had been retreating slightly, turned to look at Mineva.

"Hurry. Get onto the "Delta Plus"."

Riddhe growled as his gun was pointed at Martha unflinchingly . Mineva looked back at him and stopped her legs from nearly moving on instinct as she clenched her fists and remained here. *I'm going to say something stupid—no, something vicious.* She understood this well, and inhaled before turning her chiding stare at Riddhe again.

"What do you intend to do once you take me away? Are you going to lock me in the house again?"

She would not budge unless this was clear. *BOOM* an overhead explosion rang again, and she stared over at Riddhe, who did not seem to understand the question as he looked back, and showed a pleading look for a short moment. "We'll talk about it after we leave!" he turned back to look at Martha again.

"Hurry up and get onto the "Delta Pus". Those guys are using you as a hostage."

"It's the same in the Marcenas residence."

"Audrey…!"

"What do you want to protect? Me? The secret of the "Laplace Box"? Or do you want to protect this secret to maintain your family honor you maintained up till this point?"

"I DON'T CARE ABOUT MY FAMILY!"

The voice that came from deep within the stomach rang in everyone's ears, causing Mineva to falter from deep within. Riddhe did not look at the speechless Mineva as he pointed the gun at Martha. "What I care about aren't about those. The secret of the "Box" isn't what you think…" he muttered as his face was twisted with anguish.

"Everything spun out of control since 100 years ago…when the Prime Minister Residence "Laplace" was blown up. No matter whether it was me, my dad, or the Vist Foundation people here, everyone ended up being here because of this loss of control. But no matter how crazy the world is, there're still 10 billion people… what can I do? Am I limited to protecting this kind of world? I can' t topple everything like those people of Zeon…!"

Riddhe turned his pleading stare back upon Mineva, *Please understand,* his eyes were sparkling as he expressed these words in his stare. However, Mineva could not find words to answer immediately, whether it was the Prime Minister residence, the

explosion…she repeated the unnerving words in her heart, “Tha… that’s right.” And spotted Alberto take a step forward as he said this.

“That’s why we had to protect the secret of the “Box”. Her Highness Mineva knows that too. In that case, you should assist us and extract the information of the “Box” from the “Unicorn”—”

“SHUT UP!”

Riddhe yelled as he aimed his stare and the muzzle at Alberto, whose face tensed up as he retreated weakly.

“You don’t understand anything at all, you’re just someone who only knows how to use your authority. Don’t you dare talk to me as if you understood everything. Your Founder is the one behind everything. Syam Vist took part in the terrorist attack on “ Laplace” and took the “Box”. That was where everything began…! ”

In contrast to Martha, who narrowed her eyes slightly, Alberto widened his. Mineva suppressed her jolted heart as she looked back at Riddhe’s face. “From your expression, it seems that your aunt has more or less known about what’s going on.” Riddhe glanced aside at Martha as he continued, and deliberately lowered his gun that was pointed at Alberto.

“At that time, Syam was just a twit who had nothing. The explosion attack was not planned by him, and the way he got the “ Box” was simply out of coincidence. But after that incident, everything fell into his path. The first Prime Minister Ricardo

Marcenas was assassinated, and The Federation administration used that as an opportunity to harden their stance. A certain someone wrote a script, but ended up ruining it as Syam managed to get the "Box" as a weapon and climb up, which still wasn't nothing up till that point. That was, until the One Year War… where everything changed drastically. At that moment, Syam, and the Federation government that had been following the railpath he set, finally realized after that moment. They finally understood the significance behind what they did, and discovered the true "power " of the "Laplace Box". Not many can remain calm when bearing such a secret. The ones who know the contents of the "Box" are the leader of the Vist Foundation and part of the government led by the Marcenas. Everyone else doesn't know the contents and feared it, and to protect themselves, they quietly protected the rules they set…just like a well-trained dog."

"And you know the contents of the "Box"."

Mineva spoke up before she could think, and her body took a step forward. As everyone looked over her, she stared at Riddhe and asked, "Please tell me what is this "Laplace Box"." Their faces met for a while, and Riddhe diverted his gaze away from Mineva to escape.

"Everyone here has the right to know. What exactly is the secret of the "Box" that's causing you so main pain to such an extent?"

"…So what if you know? Once you know that it really has the power to topple the Federation, do you intend to get Neo Zeon to steal it?"

"Ensign Riddhe…! You knew that I didn't have the intention and brought me over to Earth, right?"

Mineva strengthened the tone in her words, causing Riddhe, who was unwilling to look back at her, to frown. A hundred years ago, it was said that there was a "Laplace Box" that was born at the same time as the birth of the Universal Century—in fact, no matter what it was within, she could turn her back away from it. She had to face the truth, think and accept it no matter how it was, all in order to solve the situation in front of her. With the noises of the battle still going on behind her, Mineva waited for the other man to say the truth. Riddhe glanced aside, and their eyes met for a short moment before he turned his head away, "…If I can say it, I' ll really do so." And murmured with a barely audible voice.

"I hope to at least tell you alone so that I can breathe easy, but I can't. As long as you're still of Neo Zeon…as long as you're still in a position to topple the current order…"

He said this as he turned to face Mineva, "Can you become a part of our family?" and his eyes showing the same gloominess when he asked that question. The one asking and the one being asked however had the different situations, and Mineva lowered her head without thinking.

At this point, she felt that this was not the moment to address such problems, but she understood at the same time that all concerns for Riddhe revolved around that premise, and argued silently in her heart as she clenched her fists. *But you never tried to*

take me away from that house. You tried to handle all the problems alone and merely pushed the results upon me. That night, if you had not grabbed my hand and wanted me to escape with you—

BOOM. A dull explosion rang above, casting aside the troubles Mineva had for herself. The machine frame of the "Garuda" was tilted greatly, and she lost her balance as she ended up crashing into Riddhe's pilot suit.

The hangars installed at the sides were rattling, and the cranes that were dangling from the ceiling were swaying like a pendulum clock. One of the wires holding down the Medea transport carrier snapped, and a wind hollered through the deck in a terrifying manner. "Is it a direct hit?" "Are you sure someone didn't barge in to mess things up?" the subordinates were yelling. MIneva was supported by Riddhe, who lowered his gun and stood his ground amidst the rocking floor, and upon seeing a strange reflected light on his face, she gasped. The red and golden flashes were clashing, and two colors were gradually mixed into that inexplicable light—the source of the light that shone in from the rear hatch caused the Medea to appear within, and the empty mobile suit deck suddenly became bright and dark.

Her chest was starting to buzz, and her heart was starting to race. She looked out of the hatch, and spotted a thin veil of light covering the blue sky, seemingly swaying in the sky like an aurora. For every pulsation, the lights that were like capillaries formed a film of aurora that flashed through, and rained down tiny light particles that scattered everywhere. Those were similar to the scattered particles from the mega-particle shots, but they were not lights from the beams. The golden and red lights were radiating

and clashing, creating a pulsation in the light covering the " Garuda". That light caused everything within the space to resonate , and gradually created a power that could distort a large obect.

It was just like a nightmare. Mineva and the rest forgot about everything that happened as they were entranced by it. "This light …don't tell me!" Alberto muttered as he limply backtracked. He pulled up the old man in white clothes and yelled out, "HOW'S THE BRAINWAVES OF THE SPECIMEN!?"showing an abnormal sense of anxiety. Martha, who glared at him from behind, frowned and asked, "What's going on?" and without waiting for the white old man to operate on the observation installation, Alberto himself proceeded towards it and answered as he continued to tap at the keyboard, saying, "We're not too sure…no, there isn't any actual proof, I would say." He proceeded with the checks quickly, summoned out other windows, and slammed the casing of the installation, ostensibly lost about the development of the situation.

"But there is that possibility. Why didn't I notice it…?"

Alberto scratched his head as he muttered, ignoring the flustered old man. It seemed that Martha too felt a chill as she asked again, her voice showing anxiousness, "What's going on?" A pale-faced Alberto turned his head around and spoke,

"The Psycoframes are resonating. The "Unicorn" and the " Banshee" may be resonating…and creating a Psyco-field."

The reflected light was still swaying, but Mineva could be certain that Martha's expression changed, and she definitely felt that it was the first time the latter showed such an expression

clearly. As she continued to repeat the unfamiliar term Psyco-field, she looked at the sky that was flashing in the midst of this chaotic atmosphere. “That’s the “Unicorn”…is that the light from Banagher?” Riddhe muttered to himself as he too looked outside the hatch. The remaining light continued to fluctuate against each other, regardless of the air currents, flashing away—those were the light waves created by the “Unicorn” and the “Banshee” in their skirmish aboard the “Garuda”. Once she understood this, Mineva’ s hairs stood in fright as she continued to stare at the light that shook the world itself. With the “Garuda” at center, the aurora-like light expanded gradually, ostensibly trying to fold the 500m wingspan weird bird under it.

Part 9

The machine that was deflected off was pressured by the wind, and the edges of its wings were forced back. The “Unicorn” heel hooks could not grab onto the frame properly, and just when it was about to be thrown off the “Garuda”, Banagher stabbed the beam saber into the wing.

The extremely hot beam saber ripped off the armor of the craft, and the “Unicorn” glided down several meters of its wing before finally stopped at the edge. The wing surface that was flipped up gave off white smoke, and the “Banshee” with its beam saber raised charged through this smoke and right at the “Unicorn”. The eyes under the V-shaped dual horns were glowing, and the face was showing an abnormal look that could terrify anyone’s body and mind upon seeing it. Both beam sabers clashed on the tip of the wing, and Banagher, who spotted an opportunity and got

inwards, suddenly had a sensation that felt like it was going to rip his scalp as goosebumps rose all over him.

He had this feeling before when battling the “Kshatriya”, and there was ostensibly an invisible hand reaching for his head—however, this was different, more simplistic and unique. It was intangible, but it was intimidating, and he experienced a pressure that could choke himself. Whenever his machine interacted with the “Banshee”, that pressure would enter him.

The “Banshee” mounted its shield behind its back, and made use of the beam particles coming out from its arm racks to charge forward. Banagher let the “Unicorn” wield its two blades to block as he charged forward, making use of the air current to rush behind his opponent, only to see a golden glow rush out from the “ Banshee” at that moment. The light expanded from the core of the machine, forming a translucent sphere that surrounded the “ Banshee”, and twisted the wing surface at its feet.

“What in the…?”

That was not a simple glowing phenomenon. The Psycoframe of the “Banshee” was letting out a bright glow, spreading an unknown ‘force’ around. The lightning-like flash surrounded the “ Unicorn”, and Banagher had a sensation that he was being pinched by a large hand as he moved the machine back and scanned his eyes around. It was not sunset, but the sky was darkening. The mist of light flashed around the “Garuda” precariously, and the sea of clouds at their feet were churning in waves. It looked like they were in the middle of a storm, but the truth was that this was impossible. Even if the “Garuda” was

tilting to the side towards the clouds, probably because of Zinnerman's demolition work, they did not fall that much. A storm would only occur in lower area regions.

One would get the feeling that the pulsation was the light itself, a light without warmth, but where power could be helped—and in the middle of that vortex, the "Banshee" was standing there, giving off a golden glow. The machine gun turret at the feet of the black machine was twisted by the pressure of the light waves, and the black machine proceeded to attack; "Miss Marida, stop it!" Banagher exclaimed, but the light sphere around the "Banshee" expanded, enveloping the "Unicorn" in it. The gaps on the white armor was giving off the red glow of the Psycoframe, and the glows of red and golden clashed with each other as there were many exploding sounds ringing.

"This light isn't normal! Please calm down…!"

—Light.

Banagher heard a 'voice' that was not in the form of a sound as it passed through his mind in the form of a wind, causing him to widen his eyes.

—The light in my body. The light that's born in me…!

The glow that radiated from the black "Gundam" appeared in the form of Marida, and that image that charged at the "Unicorn" was like an Eastern demonness mask; upon witnessing it, Banagher nearly screamed.

—This light can save me. I won't let anyone take it away.

"No! You're wrong, Miss Marida! This light is dangerous, it's a light that can take a person's life away!"

Upon letting out these words that did not exist in his vocabulary, he could not help but shut up. The black machine continued to swing its sabers that were in tonfa form as it pressed forward while turning everything else on deaf years. The tattered shield was finally shattered as the "Unicorn" was tripped by the beam cannons, and fell onto the wing. At this moment, a sharp metallic sound agitated Banagher's hearing.

The all-view monitor let out a red luminous light, and the NT-D sign glowed on the display board. The restraints on the headrest were lifted, and the assist arms fastening the helmet down were closing in from the sides. Banagher bent down to evade the restraints before he was held down. "No! Don't let it lead you!" he yelled as he slammed the control sticks with his fists. His fingers were moving along the touch panel of the display board, giving the command to remove this mode. However, the display board did not show any reaction as the NT-D sign continued to give a bloody red glow.

"Calm down, "Unicorn". If you become a "Gundam" in this situation…!"

Things will go out of hand here. Banagher was driven by the anxiety rising up his stomach as he used both hands to press down the glowing red display board. *rooh*…the "Unicorn let out a beast-like mechanical friction sound, and the machine throbbed

about violent. The glow that could not be suppressed was fighting its way out under the armor, interfering with the glow of the " Banshee" Psycoframe, and expanding the light field in an explosive manner. The light wave patterns spread from the two " Unicorn", and enveloped the "Garuda" with the cry of twisted metal, blowing away the "Anksha" around them like paper.

Part 10

There was a sound, either a human cry or a beast's roar, causing the mobile suit deck to tremble, and their eardrums to rumble. The maddening light feast showed no signs of stopping as it got more savage. Mineva did not care about the tremors as she continued to look at the sky that continued to glow at the rear hatch. As everyone remained silent and still, "This may have happened." Alberto spoke up with a stiff tone.

"There are many things we don't know about the Psycoframes in the first place, like for example, why they glow, and why two different machines can resonate with each other even though the reception range of the psyco waves is limited…no, the term, the name is just a wave that can be observed in electricity, and we have no understanding about its true characteristics. Some people explained the Psycoframe as a metal that can enhance human consciousness, but there had never been an actual case of it, just an analysis of rational human theory. Besides, the "Unicorn" and the "Banshee" are the first machines to have full Psycoframe in history . The battle between these two is completely beyond the manufacturer's expectations, and we had never had a simulation for it. If we mass-produce such Psycoframes that have this kind of

result, what results will there be on the battlefield…I think there is a very likely possibility that a Psyco-field will be produced."

"A Psycoframe resonance, and an overload of Psycowaves which results in physical energy…you mean that this is a reenactment of the "Axis Shock" again?"

Martha spoke up. Upon seeing her pale face, it was clear that there was no need to pursue on regarding the significance of those words. "In that case, the "Garuda" is basically a paper plane in this phenomenon. Call the "Banshee" to back down, immediately." Martha commanded next, "Ye-yes" and Mineva heard Alberto's reply as she looked at the light that continued to dance about wildly without fading. The flashing light itself was throbbing, and there was pressure formed within and outside the "Garuda"; it was appropriate to call it a 'field'. That was a light that could cause goosebumps on the skin, a light that could agitate the senses; and that was the demonic light that took the rage and sadness of Marida and amplified it, a light that could take a human life away —

"Let's go."

Mineva's shoulder was grabbed unexpectedly, and Riddhe's face appeared in the direction she was being pulled towards. He forgot to control his strength, and even if it may be caused by anxiety, this caused her to feel a little repulsed.

"There's no reason for you to be here. Come with me."

"But Banagher and Marida are still…"

"Marida? Are you referring to that puppet?"

Riddhe simply spoke up, and the moment Mineva's body inadvertently tensed up, the sound of something breaking rang as the Medea transport carrier, fastened at the rear hatch, tilted drastically.

The wires snapped, and the machine that should be fastened down tilted backwards. The 70m wingspan fell from the hatch, and the Medea, that was gliding in the wind for a moment or so, flipped over and abruptly disappeared from everyone's sights. After a beat, a light that was bright enough to overpower the Psycofield, and a tremendous boom came in a moment later as it surged its way into the mobile suit deck. The fire and the Medea's clipped wing flew by the outside of the hatch, and the scattered debris and explosion shock the belly of the "Garuda", causing a numbing trembling on Mineva's feet.

"We'll get onto the space shuttle instead. Tell the captain to raise the height!"

Martha shouted as she held down her blonde hair that was unraveling in the strong winds. "It's dangerous here, let's go!" Mineva saw the growling Riddhe's face as he grabbed her arm, and instinctively shook his hand away.

"Audrey…?"

"Ensign Riddhe, I understand your good intentions, but I can't leave with you now."

Mineva understood very well that Riddhe did not have any malice, but he would choose to abandon Marida like a puppet without care, and that was something the old him would do. This man who used to be so understanding ignored all that he could see in the past because he tried to kill his old self, but even with that factored in, the pull he had was not enough for Mineva to entrust her life to. She looked back at Riddhe, giving a veil of rejection in the face of the fists that were trembling and the knees that were practically limp.

"Audrey…Mineva…" Riddhe muttered these names as he lost his voice and looked back at her. If she went with him at this point, she would simply fall into the abyss together—no, that was not the reason. Perhaps it was the feminine aspect within her that gave her the instant conclusion, that this man was not someone she was willing to go down with. His pleading look, and all that was shown in his eyes were causing her to reject them naturally. Even if she did not accept this instinctive response, her face would clearly end up ugly. "What a troublesome knight." As Mineva lowered her head, she heard a spiteful voice from beside him, and her clenched fists were trembling. Martha gave Mineva a mocking stare as she remained surrounded by the subordinates wielding their handguns.

"But I admire your guts, Ensign Riddhe. It's because of people like you that there won't be openings when the world revolves. I suppose you'll definitely become a long-lasting politician, just like your father."

It was unknown if these words she said were the biggest humiliation to him. Martha commanded the subordinates as she

stared at Riddhe. “Come, Your Highness. This way please. Let’s not embarrass the Ensign any further.” However, Mineva ignored her as she looked back at Riddhe, who stopped looking at Martha as he too turned his weakened stare back at Mineva.

“Is this the order you want to protect/”

Mineva looked deep into Riddhe’s eyes as she took a step towards him. At this moment, his shoulders shuddered.

“If the “Laplace Box” is opened, there’ll be a massive war. I dare believe that a twisted order is still better than a war. But if that kind of order is going to be suffocating…”

Mineva turned her back on Martha and the subordinates as she grabbed Riddhe’s hand together with the handgun. “Mineva…!” Riddhe muttered as he looked at his hand that remained unmoved , “I am the daughter of the Zabi family.” and Mineva continued.

“I can’t abandon my name. As a descendant of a family that had once committed a serious crime, I have a responsibility to carry out my duty.”

“Don’t do that. You’ll be killed!”

The black suit subordinates seemed to realize what was going on as they turned to look at Mineva’s back. *I know that what I’m going to do is foolish, but there’re too many people who died. As long as I remain a hostage, the sacrifices will continue to increase. If I use myself as an exchange, I can at least remove a source that will continue a wronged situation*—she took Martha’s stare from behind, took a

deep breath, and swung a hard elbow at Riddhe's abdomen with all her strength. "Mineva…!" Riddhe groaned, and she grabbed the handgun from him before turning around to face Martha, only to hear consecutive gunshots fill her five senses.

I got hit. She thought. At that moment, she could not tell whether she was standing as she closed her eyes, but someone knocked her down from behind. A sharp explosion rang, "AN INTRUDER!" and a certain voice rang above Mineva's head as the gunshots rang. A drum-like machine gun burst followed suit, and she barely opened her eyes to see a slightly yellow smoke.

She could see a scene of Martha running away with the subordinates surrounding her and the flash of someone firing a gun, lighting the place, on the other side of the smoke whirled away by the wind. "Princess!" and heard a voice amidst the gunshots. Upon hearing this familiar voice, "Zinnerman…!?" she got up while wielding her gun, snuck out from Riddhe who was lying above her, and looked for the owner of the voice in the midst of this rapidly thinning smoke. She immediately found a hulking pilot suit figure sweeping through with machine gun shots and running at her, and she immediately turned her body to him as she ran.

"Mineva, wait!" Riddhe's loud exclamation however was drowned out by gunfire, and the bullets passing through the sky flew by her head. The wind continued to blow in from the hatch, so the smokescreen could not last for long. She could see a white cloaked old man hiding behind the observation installation with a pale face amidst the smoke, and spotted Alberto coughing beside it . She readied the trigger of the handgun as she held it with both

hands, holding off any subordinate trying to approach her, and glanced behind before running off. She met Riddhe in the eyes as the latter was unable to move due to the sparks of the bullets flying across the deck, “Excuse me!” a voice called out from behind .

“Hurry, to the rear hatch!”

Zinnerman yelled out with his gruff voice as he threw a new smoke grenade. The explosion shook the mobile suit deck, and the burly arms grabbed Mineva by the collar as he ran away before the smoke covered the black silhouettes again. She hurriedly moved her legs, looked up at the face with the Federation helmet on it, and affirmed that the bearded face under the visor was definitely the loyal servant who was practically her surrogate father. *How many of them are on board—?*

“What do you plan to do next?”

“The “Garencieres” here. Please drop down with the parachute. ”

“And you?”

“There’s still something I have to do.”

Once he finished, Zinnerman immediately ducked into the blind spot of a gondola shaft and fired a spray of machine gun shots at the pursuers. He intended to remove the spare parachute in front of him, but was unable to do so. “Go! I’ll catch up later!” he pushed Mineva in the back, and she ran towards the rear hatch.

She leapt over the snapped wires and sprinted forward at the rectangular hole of the hatch. The Medea blocking the entrance had disappeared, and the rear hatch leading to the sky became exceptionally wide.

Only 50m left. If I don't get there fast, the crew might lock the hatch up. She had no time to look at Zinnerman behind her as she merely focused on running down the wide deck. However, a dazzling flash suddenly appeared, blocking her sight. She, who seemed to be pushed back by the light, covered her eyes with her hands, and at the same instant, there was a loud boom and an impact that entered the hatch, surrounding her body immediately.

She thought that the hatch in front of her had been crumpled like paper right at the instant before she was blown away, but that was an instant impression. The rampaging heat waves grilled her earlobes, and the smell of burnt hair entered her nose. After an abnormally long 2, 3 seconds, Mineva felt pain rising up in her as her back slammed into something. She moved her hands with vigor, and once she grabbed onto something hard that felt suspiciously like a steel frame, she tried her best to cuddle her body that could be blown away anytime. She did not know whether she was standing or lying on the floor, and as she held her breath and waited for the heat wave to pass by, she was suddenly covered with cold wind.

Her hearing was recovering, and the loud wind noises became gradually louder in her ears. she opened her eyelids, and what she first saw was that her hand was grabbing onto a steel bar that was poking out horizontally. She then lifted her head and saw the mobile suit deck that was larger than what her vision could hold.

The bellowing smoke scattered quickly, and an unbearable ozone stench lingered in her nose as she spotted the burnt walls and ceiling. It was the stench of the mega-particles scorching the air. The floor near the hatch that was hit directly by the beam had a crater chipped off it.

The severed surface was still red hot, and white smoke could be seen fluttering away because of the strong wing. *What about Zinnerman and Riddhe?* Mineva felt worried as she supported herself off the twisted frame again as she stood up, but the loose footing shocked her, and she immediately grabbed onto it and looked at her feet. There was no floor below her feet , only a layer of the frame that was intertwined, forming a little cliff, and the sky was below this cliff. The sea of clouds flowing towards her formed a large vortex, flowing below her feet like a torrent.

Mineva tried to stand up while using the barely collapsed floor as a footing. The beam that was shot down from above blew the hatch away and pierced through the floor. She understood that she was at the edge of the structure as she leaned her body on the frame she could only rely on. If she moved 2m forward, she could stand on the deck, but the few footing points were too weak, and they were being peeled off with the wind. She felt that they would not be able to bear her weight, and did not feel that she had the acrobatics to walk along the steel frame. The frame linking to the deck was twisted halfway through, forming a dangerous arc.

She really wished that she had taken Zinnerman's parachute, and grabbed onto the frame with her numb hands as she poked her head out to observe the situation, "Princess!" and nearly released her hands because of this voice. Zinnerman reached his

head out from the head, saw Mineva in this situation, and gasped for a moment before he yelled, “Wait there! I’ll go right over there! ” But once he said that, the sparks from the gunshots grazed his feet, and he disappeared without her reply. The sound of the machine gun was mixed in with the winds, and faded away. “ Zinnerman…!” the sudden heat wave and roar caused her to feel the impact from behind, and her body that was leaning on the metal frame tensed up. She turned her head behind, and there was a black giant falling from the wing surface as its vernier flares were etched in her eyes.

The “Gundam” mode “Banshee” readjusted itself as it let out flashes from its back and leg thrusters, and got up onto the “ Garuda” again. Mineva had tilted her head away because of the heat waves the giant gave off, but she still witnessed the luminous golden glow from the pitch black machine that was scattering around. It was the light from the Psycoframe –the Psycofield formed by the “Unicorn” and the “Banshee”. The twisted light covered the surroundings, and Mineva held her breath as she felt the two machine clash with each other on the wing as she looked at the clashing lights.

Banagher was in this light, and she could feel that he was fighting hard to avoid being sucked into Marida’s anger. The thing resonating was not a machine, but the two Psycoframes being amplified. Once she realized that this power was born from their consciousness, Mineva understood that her consciousness could be felt as well as she had a sudden thought, and shuddered at it.

She took a deep breath, exhaled it, and closed her eyes to gather her thought in the rumbling light. *This is something only a mad*

person would do, but there's a chance of it succeeding. If a human consciousness can call out and reach out to each other like this, that person with the warm hands who once caught me successfully in "Industrial 7" will definitely—

"Mineva!"

The voice that came from close by pulled Mineva's consciousness back to reality. She widened her eyes and spotted Riddhe at the edge of the deck. "Don't move, I'll go over!" the white pilot suit went out from the charred black deck, and immediately slid down the tilted surface of the hole without hesitation. He went down the twisted metal frame and reached his hand forward as his eyes met Mineva's, who lowered her head as she hesitated on whether she too should reach her hand out.

This isn't the hand I should be holding. She could not think of an appropriate line as she let her stare fall onto the flowing clouds. "Mineva…!?" Riddhe muttered as he reached his hand out, but just when his fingers were about to touch her shoulders, she took a step back from the narrow footing.

"What are you doing? Hurry up and give me your hand?"

"I should have said it before, Riddhe. You're heading down a different path from me."

Riddhe gasped as he pulled his hand back slightly, showing despair on his face. "You're still saying that…!?" he reached out again, but Mineva looked forward and bid farewell,

"I'll use my eyes to see the true identity of the "Laplace Box"."

An icy cold gust blew by them, and the shattered deck was peeled off. Riddhe looked back at Mineva, and his body that was grabbing onto the frame lost its balance.

"Perhaps I'll commit the same crime as my father or grandfather, but even so, I—"

"You still intend to fight against the world?"

The stiff voice interrupted, and she looked over at him in surprise.

"Nobody, whether it's those who rely on their privileges or those who have dissatisfaction, believes that this world will rely change. If we can protect the current life, the world 100 years later will mean nothing to them. Do you want to fight against those people alone? What's the point of sacrificing so mu—"

"I'm not alone."

Mineva felt the familiar light from behind as she said firmly. *I know that this choice's illogical, but the hand I want is in that light. Maybe nothing can be done, maybe we'll just die with regret, but this is a test to me—a test to see whether this puny me has the fate to interfere with the world.*

Riddhe's face was twisting in a near-teary state as he reached his hand out with all he had. "Mineva, please…!" Upon hearing this voice he eked out, she lifted her face decisively.

"I assure you that I'll find the most appropriate method. Goodbye, Riddhe Marcenas. I won't forget you!"

As she yelled out, she closed her eyes and released herself from the frame. She felt a floating sensation covering her body, " MINEVA!" and Riddhe's yell faded away in an instant as the sound of the wind blowing by her ears was the only thing she could hear. Her body passed through the hole in the "Garuda" deck floor and fell towards the clouds, not supported by anything as it got dragged with the torrents. The freezing currents swarmed her as she swallowed her realization, and she felt her mind and body freeze as she spun 5000m in the sky.

She felt neither a sense of falling or floating. If she had to describe it, she felt that her body was drifting as it mixed in with the falling shrapnel, dancing wildly in the wind. *I can't die now, it's not time yet. You should be able to sense me, just like how I sensed you now. That's because you right now are on a machine that enhances a human's consciousness*— the words she carelessly muttered deep within became tangible as she felt a pulsation within. It became a thin glow from the forehead, and once it resonated with the surrounding glowing field, her mouth that was blocked by the air currents let out a voice for real.

"Come and catch me, Banagher!"

Part 11

A bright light in the form of a voice entered Banagher's head, causing his body on the cockpit to shake. He suddenly blinked as if he was blown away by the wind below.

"Audrey—!?"

Banagher turned his head around and used the beam saber to block the beam tonfa of the "Banshee". He used the momentum to let the machine retreat to the edge of the "Garuda" wing, and looked over at the clouds that were passing by below. *No doubts about it, she's calling me.* A certain familiar lifeform was calling out to Banagher, and the direct thoughts passed through the thick clouds as they entered his body.

There was no room for him to make a choice. He held his breath and stepped on the pedal. The "Unicorn" leapt up from the " Garuda" wing and entered the empty sky before ripping through the field of light and disappearing within the clouds.

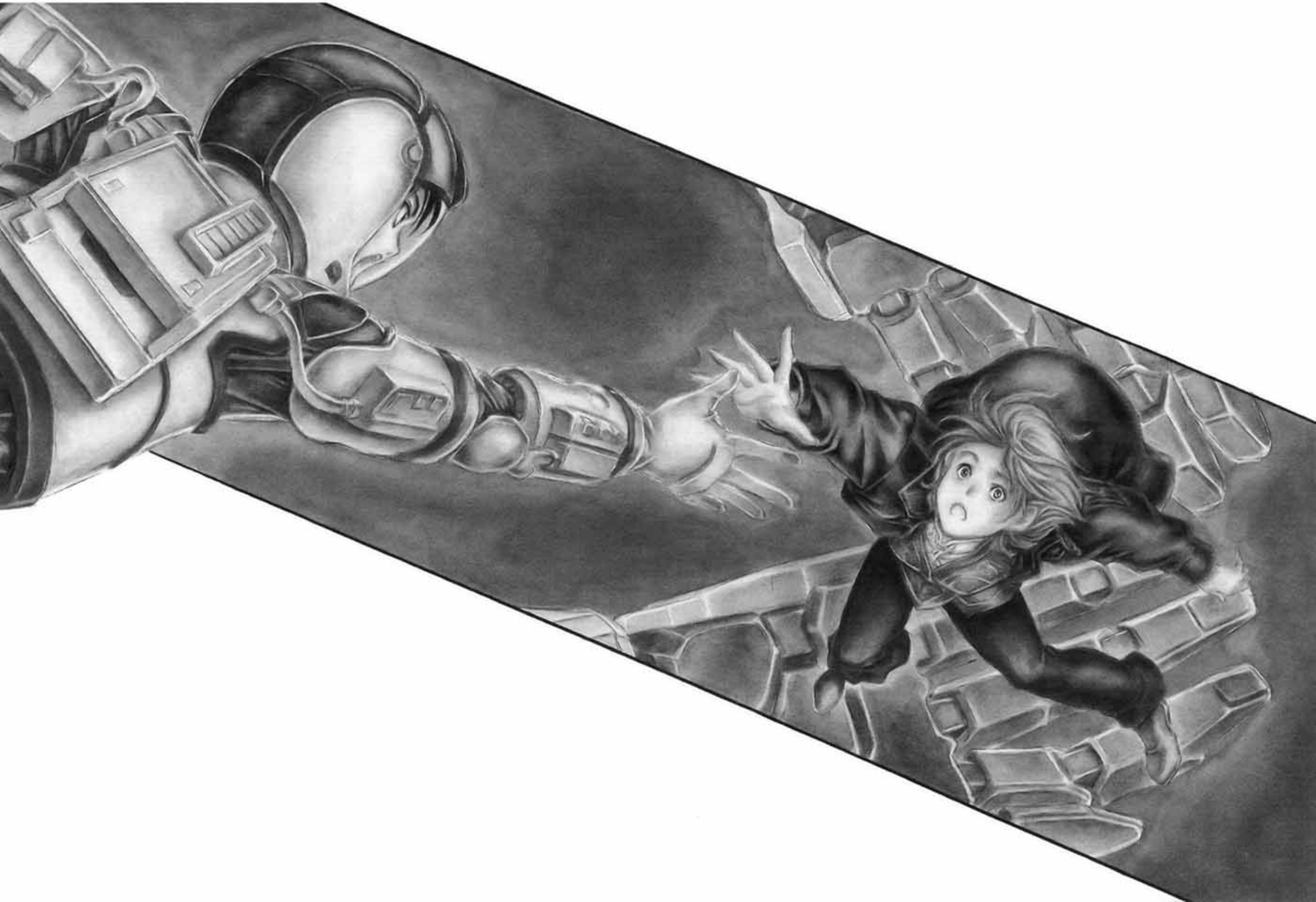
(Hold it!) Marida's call was mixed in with the static, and though the massive frame of the "Garuda" had already left his vision, the beam of the Beam Magnum followed him as it pursued the " Unicorn" and grazed it. Banagher managed to evade the scattered particles by spinning around, and gathered his thoughts on the thick layers of clouds. 5000m, 4800m, 4200m, the altitude meter continued to decrease in value, and the "Unicorn" expanded its limbs out wide as it charged down like a rocket. The clouds disappeared soon after as an endless sea surface appeared in front of his eyes, and his main camera caught sight of a certain bean-sized object. Her flight jacket was flapping, and her slender limbs were trembling as her silhouette fell straight down the roaring atmosphere.

She's there. Banagher widened his eyes as he stared only at Audrey as he gripped hard onto the control sticks.

(You can do it, right? "Unicorn"?)

A rumbling sound, probably a roar, rose up from within the machine, and the NT-D logo blinked. The white armor slid apart amidst the friction from the air, and the sudden low pressure caused the water in the atmosphere to freeze as the "Unicorn" was immediately surrounded by water vapor in an explosive manner. The lone horn on its forehead opened in a V-shape, cutting through the surrounding white mist, and the exposed Psycoframe let out a glow as the machine in its "Gundam" form used up all its verniers. The "Unicorn Gundam" spread its limbs wide to increase the air resistance and negated its falling speed as it approached Audrey.

The person flying through the wind gradually got larger, and the cursor overlapped with her figure on the monitor. Audrey's hand fidgeted slightly as she turned her body around, and the emerald eyes were slightly opened, staring at Banagher. She had not passed out. It was just like the moment when she was floating in the sky of "Industrial 7" as her body, hoping for survival, appeared, in front of him. He wanted to let the "Unicorn Gundam" reach out to get her, but determined that he would not be in time, and opened the cockpit. With the incoming wind pressure blowing upon him, he brought his body away from the linear seat and reached out from the hatch, just like the last time.



Audrey's profile flashed by in front of him and entered a blind spot in his vision that was formed by the cockpit, preventing him from seeing things clearly. The Intention Automatic System detected his emotions as the machine started to regulate its falling speed. He saw Audrey again, and reached his body out from the hatch; at that moment, he clearly saw the emerald eyes looking back at him. He was prompted by his throbbing heart, and reached out his arm more just when his body was about to be blown away by the air currents. The hands of the "Unicorn Gundam" moved too as they clasp with each other to form a net, caught her gently, and brought her towards the cockpit. Banagher reached his body forward as he held himself from the hatch, and once their fingers matched, he grabbed her hand tightly.

He immediately pulled her towards him, and they fell into the cockpit. After using all his strength to grab that delicate body, he sat back on the linear seat, closed the hatch, and grabbed the control sticks again. *Haa,* Audrey heaved a huge sigh, and Banagher could feel the warmth from her forehead reaching his chest, and spreading through his pilot suit. *She's alive, alive in my arms.* He trembled, both in body and in mind as he had the urge to embrace her tightly, but he understood that the situation did not allow for it. The machine had already fallen to below 3000m in height, and there was nowhere to land as he could only see the blue seas below him.

He opened the throttles and let the main thrusters flare out. They managed to slow down and regain approximately 100m in height, but they were still in trouble. Even if they could negate the falling speed, he had no idea how to handle it. If they fell into the

sea, the drowned machine could be crushed by the water pressure. “Banagher…” Audrey let out a troubled hoarse voice, and Banagher did not look at her face as he answered, “I’ll think of something!” and answered as he felt the weight of the life on his knees. *I finally managed to meet Audrey, and now I’m going to crash into the sea?* He bit his lips regretfully, and just when his trembling hands grabbed onto the control sticks, a siren suddenly rang, and an enlarged window opened on its own as it showed an approaching object.

A familiar triangular ship was descending down the clouds. “ The “Garencieres”…!” Audrey exclaimed, but Banagher did not pay attention as he stepped on the pedal first. The main thrusters of the “Unicorn Gundam” let out long smoke trails, and it fell towards the falling “Garencieres”. The 120m long ship body closed in on it, and once it got right below the “Unicorn Gundam” that was trying to elevate itself, Banagher immediately spotted a “ Geara Zulu” poking out from the deck, waving at it.

The two machines crossed by each other, seemingly reaching out to each other for aid. The “Unicorn Gundam” got pulled onto the “Garencieres”, and its limbs touched the ground. The “Geara Zulu” put its hand around the “Gundam”, (I caught him! Bring the ship up!) and Ivan’s exclaiming voice rang through the contact loop. The thruster nozzles on the aft let out flares as the “ Garencieres” accelerated, lifted its bow, and started to rise up the sky again. Ivan’s “Geara Zulu” quickly ducked inside the hatch again to reduce the air resistance, and a shockwave created waves upon the sea surface.

(Are you alright, Banagher?)

The machine followed Ivan's machine as its lower body slipped into the hatch, and Flaste's voice immediately rang through the cockpit. Banagher met Audrey face to face, and grabbed her shoulder in a daze, "I'm fine! Audrey's with me too!" he then said that with a thoroughly delighted voice. (Audrey?) However, Flaste asked back with a puzzled tone.

"It's me, Flaste. Sorry to trouble you.)

Audrey's sudden interjection caused a stunned moment of silence in the wireless communicator. (Eh, this voice, is that the Princess!?) Soon after, a higher pitched voice rang through the communicator, and Banagher and Audrey gave smiles. The dazzling emerald eyes in front of him suddenly had a sense of life, and he frantically removed his hand that was resting upon her shoulder.

(What's the situation now? Where's the Captain?)

"He's still in the "Garuda". Please direct the ship there."

"Don't say something unreasonable! If the limbering " Garencieres" is to approach it, it'll just become a target for the enemy unit. Leave the recovery of the Captain to Besson.)

"Miss Marida's on that enemy unit! Please turn the ship around and bring me there. Also, please take care of Audrey."

Banagher immediately finished off his words without waiting for a response, and held onto the control sticks again. He let the " Unicorn Gundam" kneel down on the deck, checked the air

pressure, opened the cockpit hatch, and leaned the machine towards Ivan's "Geara Zulu". He looked over at Audrey, seated on his knees, and gave a slight nod. Her emerald eyes showed a little uncertainly, "Banagher…" as she put her hand on his shoulder.

"I heard your voice clearly just now."

Banagher held her hand and said this as he looked straight at her. Her fingertips were trembling as she had not regained her warmth yet, and she looked up at Banagher's eyes.

"I'm so happy. I finally understood why I'm here. You called me here."

"I'm still…"

"If this feeling is real, the Captain and my voices will definitely reach Miss Marida's heart. I'll definitely bring her back, so wait here, okay?"

The "Geara Zulu" on the other side of the cockpit hatch gave a glow in its monoeye as it reached its hand over. "Over here, Princess!" Audrey spotted Ivan, who showed his face from the cockpit, and looked back at Banagher again. She tried her best to remove all uneasiness from her face, showed her dignity as a leader, "I'll leave it to you then, Banagher Links." and said as she got up. Banagher endured the sudden loss of weight on his knees as he gave her a look of promise.

"Be careful of that light. It's a demonic light that absorbed Marida's sadness and continues to expand. You'll be sucked in if you fight it directly."

Audrey brought her feet onto the hatch as she silently gave a warm look right at Banagher. Her tone, her precise insight made Banagher certain that it was the Audrey he knew, "Roger that." He answered as he closed the helmet visor. She gave him an affirming look, leapt towards the "Geara Zulu" arm and followed it down to the mobile suit deck. The "Unicorn Gundam" cockpit hatch and cover were then sealed as it got up and poked its head out from the upper deck hatch where the wind currents swirled.

The white mist passed by his vision, and the ship approached the "Garuda" that was showing itself through the gaps. Banagher spotted the ship that had one-thirds of its engines malfunctioning with black smoke rising from it, and dismounted the Beam Gatling guns that had a few shots left from the "Unicorn" arm as it wielded the 4-shot guns in both hands. There were a lot of things he wanted to say, he wanted to ask. He would do any task laid before him to avoid any sacrifices, and to buy time for everyone to calm down and face the issues. He looked up at the thin veil of light that was swaying with a dangerous pressure, and made up a suggestion of compromise in his heart.

Part 12

The pressure that faded once rose near her feet again. The thoughts of others continued to swarm her mind without relent, and she could not slay them all no matter how she slashed. The " Gundam" continued to stand like a ghost, giving off a pressure—

"Why, why can't I beat the "Gundam"…?"

(Ple Twelve, we're going to change the plans to launch the shuttle. You're to come back and protect it. The substitute Foundation Leader is on the ship—)

Alberto's voice rang instead Ple Twelve's head that was full of pain. "Shut up!" she groanded as she opened the helmet and tried to break away from the headrest restrains and bent her body towards the display board, nearly leaning on it. The discomfort of the headache clotted the blood within her head, and her vision was distorted as a result. She spat out some bitter saliva, and the tablet Bentner developed as a sedative entered in. She had consumed countless tablets, but her headaches showed no signs of easing up. The signals of her pain went from her brain to her vertebrae, and her fingertips that were grabbing onto the control sticks were throbbing as well.

Eliminate the enemy, the "Gundam". That's what I have to do. My headache will stop then, and the discomfort in my body will disappear. This understanding flashed through Ple Twelve's mind in the form of signals as she wiped away the spit at her mouth. She gathered her consciousness on the pressure that was closing in, and let the " Banshee", which was in sync with her, ready the beam rifle. The pitch black machine gave off a golden luminous light, and as the

field of light expanded, she felt another pressure, different from the “Gundam”, rising below her feet.

That mobile suit flew out from the rear deck of the “Garuda”, transformed into its Waverider form as it went around the “ Banshee” for a shot moment, and then transformed into its mobile suit form as it descended near the edge of the “Garuda” wing. The thick grey streamlined body was looking towards the sea of clouds below it, completely ignoring the “Banshee” as it tilted its head around. The allied machine marker and the name “Delta Plus” were indicated on the enlarged window, but these details did not matter to Ple Twleve. That was because the visor on the main camera was sunk inwards, and the head looked like it had eyes on it; to her, it simply looked like a “Gundam” without the horns

“You’re a “Gundam” too…!?”

Ple Twelve let out an outburst as she aimed the beam rifle at it. The “Delta Plus” showed no signs of dodging as it only cared about looking towards the clouds. The human thoughts inside the machine suddenly entered her head, causing her fingers on the trigger to numb.

—Mineva, where did you go? Answer me. Don’t leave me alone, don’t leave me…

That thought interfered with Ple Twelve’s consciousness like noise, and she could sense the owner of this thought crying. The pleading ‘voice’ became a discomforting particle bouncing around in her mind, and she felt nauseous as she exerted strength into the trigger.

"If you're just going to weep here, DON'T GET IN MY WAY!!"

The beam rifle let out a flash, and the empty Magnum cartridge was ejected from the gun. The beam grazed the "Garuda" wing, brushed right by the engine block, and the right shoulder of the " Delta Plus" was devoured by the light. As it was deflected by the impact and falling, the engine block of the "Garuda" let out flames as it got hit by the scattered particles that exploded, and the large machine lost another support as it tilted heavily.

The "Banshee" lost its balance as it knelt down, and Alberto's voice could be heard within the cockpit, (Calm down, Ple Twelve! If the "Garuda" goes down—) she could no longer distinguish noise from human voices as they tormented her head, and she was forced to remove her helmet and toss it away. She felt annoyed by her long hair that scattered, and gathered her concentration upon the actual "Gundam" itself. *I have to protect Master*. This forced view flicked in her mind, and just when she asked herself who her Master voice, (Marida, do you hear me? It's me, Zinnerman.) Another voice rang through the communicator.

"Zinnerman…Master?"

(That's right. I hated this saying, but you just won't change. It really suits your stubborn nature, but I'm the one at fault here. I named you, but I always treated you as a subordinate.)

The words came in fast, but the voice that seemed to be reminiscing started to shake her eardrums. At that moment, Ple Twelve's synchronized vision with the "Banshee" was cut off, and so spotted another thing right in front of her. Where was this place

? She knew this place. Her master's large hand handed her a photo , and she took it during a time when her hair was not as long as how it was at this point. She could see Zinnerman in his thirties on it and a woman who seemed to be his wife. He pointed at a girl who was about 5 years old in the photo, and muttered that he had never seen this photo for 10 years.

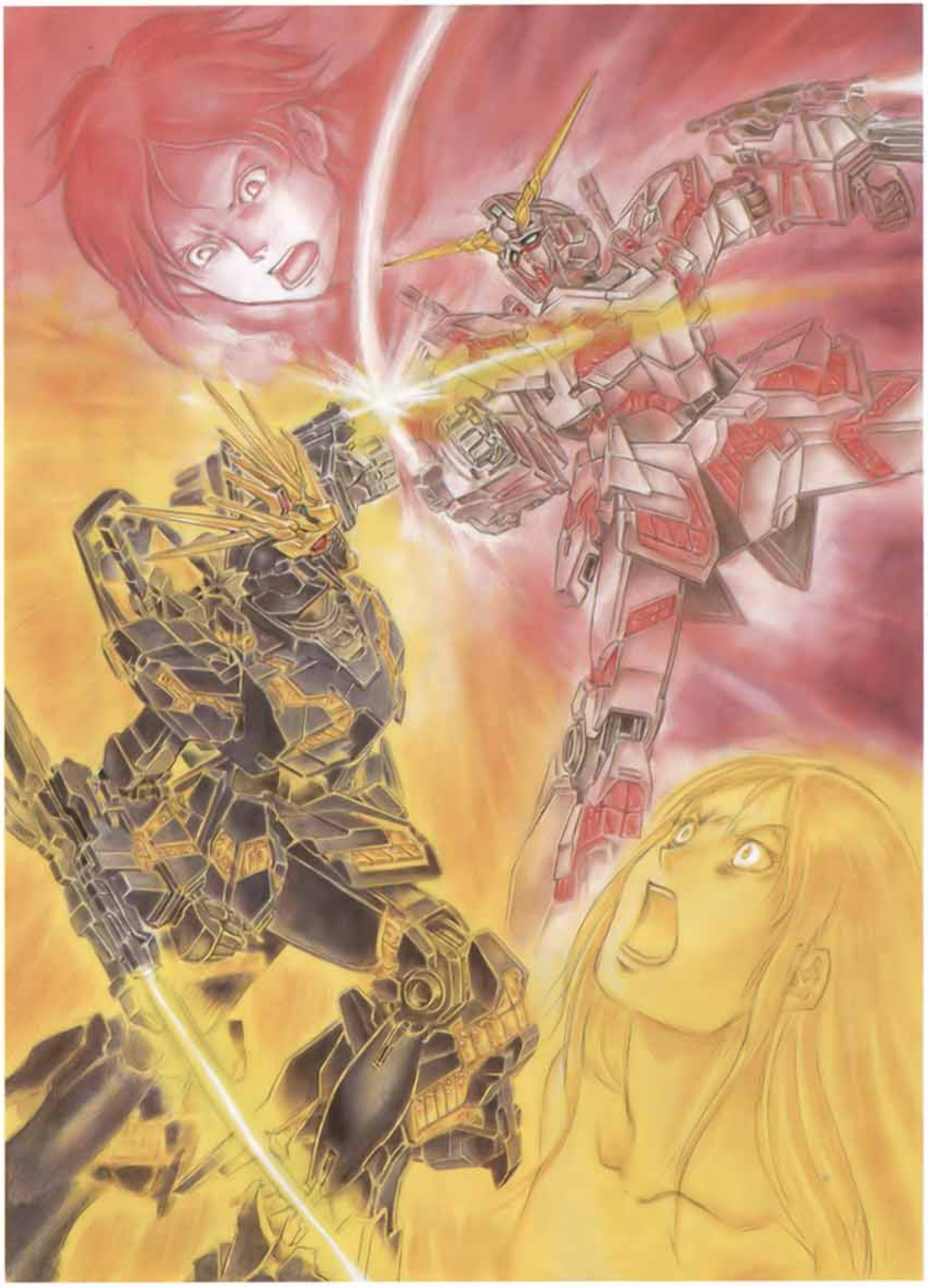
If she's still alive, she'll probably be of the same age as you—that's right, her name is— The interrupted words exploded within her mind, creating a bigger trigger of the headaches as it pressed towards her head from the instead. She desperately pressed down her head that felt like it was going to explode, (Let's go home together, Marida.) but a voice called out from reality, causing her to open her eyes.

"The "Garencieres" is here, and the Princess is safe on the ship. Everything will be normal when you come back. Come back with me to space.)

Ple Twelve removed her fingers that was entrenched within her scalp, and looked at the hands that had several strands of hair on it . Those were the hands controlling the "Banshee", those were the hands that killed a lot of humans, and she even killed her Master. She declared war on the world that robbed her of her 'light', eliminating everything that tried to hold her down. Right, she killed him. There was no way a killed person could appear here. There was no way the situation could return back to normal, just like how she could not give birth to a 'light' in her body.

The "Anksha" advancing forth scattered and fired at the enemy unit. The "Gareniceres" passed through the shots and closed in on

the “Garuda”, while the “Gundam Unicorn” knelt down on the ship shot out beams to hold them back. “…It’s impossible to revert everything to normal now.”Ple Twelve let out this voice from her dry throat, and grabbed onto the control sticks again. (Marida…!?) she ignored this call from the communicator and let the “Banshee” face the “Gundam” that was approaching.



「みんな、消えてしまえっ!」——突進する〈バンシィ〉のビームトンファーが〈ユニコーンガンダム〉のそれと激突し、粒子束の干渉光とは異なる光が〈ガルダ〉の翼をゼリーのごとく揺らめかせた。(本文より)

"There's no need to revert things back to normal.
EVERYTHING CAN JUST DISAPPEAR NOW!"

The explosion of emotions resonated with the Psycoframe, forming light wave patterns on the machine that scattered around. The armor of the "Garuda" took the impact and was ripped up, and as an "Anksha" was knocked aside by the impact, the " Unicorn Gundam" leapt up from the "Garencieres" as it lit its beam tonfas. The Psycoframe of the white machine was giving off light that resonated with the "Banshee" light waves, *Miss Marida!* A 'voice' from this response entered her body and mind, and the violating-like thoughts infuriated her. The "Banshee" charged over with its beam tonfas to clash with the "Unicorn Gundam". There was a light, different from particle interference, formed as it caused the "Garuda" wing to wobble like jelly.

The sound of a certain large object being twisted rang above the head, and the armor was gradually ripped off as the noise spread through the empty mobile suit deck. The term screech would not be enough to describe this sound as the "Garuda" let out a dying cry as it fell greatly, and Zinnerman's floating body crashed into the wall.

The entire hatch was blown off, and the large crack opened above the deck was letting out air. The roaring winds passed by his ears as he heard the frantic voices of the crew, "Retreat to the deck!" "We might have to evacuate everyone here. Get everyone to the escape pods!" he barely managed to distinguish the yells as he clicked his tongue secretly in the blind pod of the hangar. The Vist Foundation people had already moved to the shuttle, and while

they would not be able to head to space from this altitude, they would probably prioritize their escape here. The communicator link to the “Garencieres” was up a little while ago, and the “ Unicorn” landed on before it passed by above the “Garuda”; however, there was no news of it at this point. He also could not contact Besson on the “DO-DAI Kai” and no matter how he called out, he could only hear noise.

The noise entered the communicator through the “Garuda” antenna. Whenever the light flashed above, the bad reception would worsen; and whenever the light disappeared, the noise faded. The “Unicorns” were clashing with each other, creating light and noise. Zinnerman could still maintain contact with the black “Unicorn” by the contact loop, and he let the thinning oxygen into his lungs as he called out into the communicator, “ Marida!” However, an intense tremor and a loud roar shook the ground; the communicator dropped out of his hands as he fell, and as he remained sprawled on the floor, he hurriedly reached his hand out. At this moment, a man appeared and reached his leg out to step on the communicator, and the gun pointed at his head pressed him down.

“Don’t confuse her any further.”

A man with fat cheeks muttered as he pointed the gun. Zinnerman could tell, despite the ash smeared on the other man’s face, that it was the face of the man wearing the Vist Foundation attire. This man was standing watch with a group of white clothed researchers before Zinnerman launched his raid.

"She's no long a member of Neo Zeon. Give up and leave this place. The "Garuda" won't last for long."

This person is Marida's current master. Is his name Alberto? the blood surged up Zinnerman's head as he growled, "What nonsense are you spouting." and glared angrily at Alberto's face from past the trembling muzzle.

"You're the one who should scram. I'll take Marida back. She's not the tool you people think she is."

The gun held in both hands trembled even more. *This man here isn't used to such a situation.* Zinnerman understood that it was not wise to agitate the other man, but he still finished his words. "I KNOW THAT!" however, Alberto responded with an agitated tone that completely defied his expectations.

"SHE'S NOT A TOOL! SHE'S…"

Alberto was at a loss of words, and after twisting his lips, he showed a bitter expression on his face. *What's going on?* Zinnerman frowned for a moment, "Master Alberto! Hurry! The shuttle's leaving!" and a voice rang as a white clothed old man appeared from the side, covered completely in ash. "Oi, someone's calling you." Zinnerman pointed his chin, and Alberto glared back at him as he exerted more strength into his hands holding the handgun. The bloodshot eyes met each other, *not good…* and Zinnerman thought as he gritted his teeth. At this moment, the light shining in from the rear hatch suddenly darkened, and Alberto's body could be seen shrouded in the shadows.

He turned his eyes around in shock, and saw the black " Unicorn" with the thruster lights on its back, followed by the white frame of the "Unicorn Gundam" closing in on it. Both "Gundams" proceeded back and forth within the deck, and the hangar was knocked down as the hot winds of the released verniers spread around. Zinnerman saw the black "Unicorn" fall as its hand flatten the old man in white clothes. Blood and flesh was splattered everywhere immediately, but the impact and noises of the clashes between these several ton machines immediately drowned everything else out as a hot wind swirled about, covering everything as it blew above his head.

The workcar got knocked into the air, crashing right into the compressed gas cylinders, creating an explosion of flames. The energy of the explosion created a quake, causing Zinnerman, who was sprawled on the floor to feel a rumbling, and he lifted his head only when the heat wave passed by. Alberto had disappeared, and the two "Gundams" were in front of him, stepping on the floor and trying to get up. The black "Gundam" was lit by the flames, giving off a similar look as the "Unicorn Gundam" it was facing in this mirage, and the Psycoframe giving off the golden glow was flickering like it was breathing.

The sleeve of the machine gave off the heat of the beam saber, causing the handrail of the catwalk to melt and bend like malt candy. "MARIDA!" Zinnerman covered his face as his skin was being burnt, but the black "Unicorn Gundam" did not care about what was below it as it continued to backtrack and knock over the work vehicles.

Part 13

The work vehicle got crushed by the 30 ton plus machines and let out a cry; however, this was merely a piano note in the middle of a big orchestra. Alberto stubbornly lifted his head that was knocked onto the ground, and brought himself up, only to gasp at the sight of the 2 machines in front of him.

The fires were burning through the mobile suit deck, and the " Banshee" and the "Unicorn Gundams" had glowing eyes as they eyed each other, forming two shadows that were facing each other. The Psycoframe for both machines had already decreased in brightness, and the field chose not to activate nearby, probably because it was a self-conscious reaction not to do so in the cramped space? Alberto laid limp as he sat back on the floor, staring at the luminous light that was hard to distinguish; at the next moment, both machines let out the heat they had when they charged forward, drenching him completely in heat. Just when he inadvertently lifted his hands to cover his face, the heavy metal colliding impact rang through the deck, and the interference waves of the beam tonfas created an artificial shockwave.

The overly dazzling beams crossed each other, and the flying high-heat particles was scattered all around as powder of light. The particles landed between Alberto's legs and let out a melting sound, scaring him as he took several steps back. As he reached behind, his hand touched another person's arm, and he gasped as he turned around. The white clothed sleeved arm was snapped, and Alberto could recognize that it belonged to Bentner, but he was not certain. That was because there was no body beyond the

snapped shoulder, just like the white clothes it hard, and he could only see paint-like blood lying on the floor.

The scattered particles of the beams dropped into the blood, and the deep red color mixed in with the solid objects let out a white steam. The smell of cooked meat entered his nose, and this agitation alone caused him to remain seated even as his senses were numb. (Master Alberto! Please answer! The shuttle's about to launch!) the communicator at his waist exclaimed, but he ignored it as he merely looked at the soles of the "Banshee" moving up and down. (What are you doing, Alberto!?) It was only up till the point where Martha yelled out hysterically that he finally thought of bringing the wireless communicator to his ears.

(We're leaving. Forget about that specimen. We just need to find a replacement, whether it's the machine or the pilot.)

Alberto's numb senses were jolted awake by this voice, and he looked down at the communicator in his hands. *She doesn't understand. Aunt doesn't understand, and she has no intention of understanding—no, maybe to her, everyone else is just something that can be replaced anyhow.* (There's no time. Hurry—) Alberto ignored Martha's call as he switched the frequency of the communicator. " Ple Twelve, it's me, your Master. Do you hear me?" he said as he looked up at the "Banshee" clashing with the "Unicorn Gundam".

"There's no need to reclaim the machine back. Wreck the " Unicorn". Hurry up and beat that guy and escape me with. You and I are the only ones left here."

The “Banshee” deflected the enemy’s beam tonfa and immediately reached to grab the “Unicorn Gundam” by its head and slammed it hard against the wall. The impact of the collision bent the catwalk there, and the shaft of the gondola fell rapidly. The 6 men capacity metal basket crashed down in front of his eyes, giving off sparks, but he did not feel fear from this as he slowly got up. The “Banshee” was already controlled by the NT-D, and the system was gradually losing control due to the resonance of the Psycoframe. The pilot was in the rampaging machine, merely acting as a part used to drive the system, and there was no voice that could reach Marida anymore. Alberto knew that he was futile of him to say this, “Just like that, good girl.” But he looked intoxicated at the “Banshee” as it swung its mechanical beam tonfas. The “Unicorn Gundam” dodged the beam in the nick of time, and charged right at the “Banshee”, which swung its beam tonfa down as the edge of the stick grazed the white machine; the scattered particles flickered like fireworks.

“If it’s you, you’ll definitely be able to beat the “Unicorn”. This guy’s the cause of everything. As long as you destroy it, the path leading to the “Box” will remain sealed, and aunt will only give up . Even my father…”

Can only give up, right? Alberto could not help but ask himself, and shut his mouth as he answered himself. Wrong, that man will never stop. Even with such a change in the situation, Cardeas Vist’ s modus operandi was that he will think about what move to make next. He forcefully used his firm self as a basis, determining that those who were weak were simply lazily. That willful foolish man ignored his own son and left the “Unicorn” to the son born out of

wedlock. Why did things end up like this? Who let the gears spin out of control first? The mother who could not follow the extremely strong-willed father, and died as a result of her frail heart? The mistress who had a relationship with the father behind Alberto's back after the mother died? The arrogant father himself who devoted himself to opening the "Box" after the mistress left him? The aunt who proclaimed that they had to eliminate the father? Or he himself who helped execute that plan?

He recalled the expression his father had when he died, that look of despair and pity appeared in his mind, causing the emotions to suddenly appear and dampen his vision. *No, I'm not the one at fault here. It's his fault. That Banagher Links took dad away, and even took the machine he built, and he didn't even know that he stole something at all. That guy caused all order in the world to be thrown out of order.*

Just looking at that guy alone makes me anxious. For some reason, I just feel anxious for some reason, and I feel inferior, like I'm being taunted for being useless. It's good if he was never born. If I could be as strong as him, I won't have a complete breakdown in relation with dad, I€ won't end up with an abnormal relationship with aunt, and I can't possibly harm dad— Tears swelled in his eyes and slid down his cheeks; he wiped them away and brought the communicator to his mouth. He set the frequency to the public channel and growled. " To all the mobile suits surrounding the "Garuda", shoot the " Unicorn" on my command!" he then caught sight of the white machine in his wet vision.

"It's fighting against an allied machine on the "Garuda" deck. Shoot it down immediately when it stops."

He held the communicator that had only noise as he turned his face to the incoming heat wave. The water droplets stained upon his face was evaporated, and he lifted his lips in a sneer. To his eyes, the Psycoframe glow was increasing, and the white devil was still trying to send the "Banshee" into the brink of insanity. *I won't let you take anything else away from me. Marida will beat you. This one life that's strong-willed, gentle and transience mother-like will defeat you and settle all our debts. I don't need aunt, and I don't need dad. I'll just wait here, until the moment the "Banshee" slice you apart and chase away the darkness that has no way out—*

A little rattling sound rose up his feet, and it seemed that the thrusters of the shuttle had already lit up. His sanity deduced this, and it was blown apart by the rampaging hot winds as he merely continued to look at the lion and the unicorn clashing with each other. The imagery of the tapestry hanging in the Vist residence appeared together with the scene in front of him, dulling the dim flames further.

Part 14

If the altitude was at 10,000m, where the air was thin, the momentum could propel the large space shuttle into space. The rocket engine that was as long as the shuttle itself let out a flare, and as it dragged a long trail in the sky, the shuttle draped under the wing of the shuttle was dropped off. At first, the shuttle merely moved forward, and as it left the "Garuda" wing, it accelerated, and after 10 seconds, was faster than supersonic.

The ripples of the shockwaves spread from the front tip of the " Garuda", and the shuttle gradually moved away from the round shaped shock cone. Despite the massive resistance in the atmosphere, the shuttle used the speed of the "Garuda" itself as a shield, and after continuous acceleration, the flare smoke immediately left a trail that lasted for several kilometers.

The "Unicorn Gundam" released the "Banshee" in its arms and got ready to steady itself, and Banagher was distracted by that sound and tremor for a minute, but the gathered particles swung up from below and sliced through the beam Gatling gun, and he clicked his tongue annoyingly as a result. He threw the melted and severed Gatling gun in his right hand, and used the beam tonfa on his left arm to block the continuous attacks. The feet responded on their own automatically as their reverse hooks stabbed into the gaps of the deck tiles, and though the machine was able to steady its footing as a result, it was really hard to fight against the opponent with such an unstable posture. The deck slightly tilted over, the burning work vehicle and the collapsing frames were thrown towards the wall of the right wing, and the "Unicorn Gundam" slammed into the hangar right behind it.

"The floor's tilting?"

There were no signs of the tilting being corrected as a large amount of shrapnel fell from the deck that was tilted 30 degrees. This was the result of the shuttle's launch, and the trim tanks under the right wing were activated to create a balance with the left wing that still had a shuttle on it, but there was a malfunction in their opening mechanism, preventing it from sliding over the

fuselage. The “Garuda” lost balance due to the launch of the shuttle and was tilted to the right. The “Unicorn Gundam” managed to avoid tripping as it got on its feet, and the “Banshee” pointed the beam tonfa at the “Unicorn Gundam”. Banagher let the machine turn to dodge, and the impact that struck the cockpit shocked him.

The restrains on the cockpit hooked onto the white machine’s shoulders, and it was too late for Banagher when he realized it as the beam saber charged right at the cockpit. *Is this the end?* he did not have the time to ask himself, let alone close his eyes as he looked right at the beam saber, his teeth clattering due to the regret rising in him, as the beam saber charging right at his eyes seemed to stop at that moment.

(Marie!)

At the same time, there was a gruff male voice from the communicator. Banagher tilted his frozen neck, “Marie…?” he uttered out the name as he spotted Zinnerman on the monitor, standing on the catwalk right beside the “Unicorn Gundam” head.

The figure dressed in the pilot suit reached its body out from the bent handrail as it called out for the pilot of the “Banshee”, and then moved from the “Unicorn Gundam” shoulder to the cockpit hatch at the abdomen. “This is too reckless, Captain!” Banagher again looked back at the beam blade that was vibrating extremely close in, and raised the machine’s right hand to the chest.

Zinnerman slid off the cockpit hatch, hurriedly rolled over onto the hand of the “Unicorn Gundam”, grabbed the large finger that

he could embrace with both arms, and got up. (Marie. Your name should be Marie.) he called out as he looked up at the "Banshee", ignoring everything else from his sights, and Banagher could only look at his back in shock.

(I've always wanted to call you Marie, but I couldn't, because I was too scared. I was scared of losing someone important again, and gave up on all happiness I could get. Let's go home, Marie. Come home with daddy.)

Zinnerman opened his arms wide as he called out from the hand of the "Unicorn Gundam". The beam tonfa that was extremely near him looked like it was going to burn him, and the " Banshee", ready with the weapon gave a silent stare. Banagher realized that this was a moment where he could not and should not interfere with as he looked at both of them as they faced off. The "Banshee" silhouette appeared in the mirage formed by the beam blade, and the "Gundam" face seemed to be crying.

Part 15

(…I understand that it might be too late to say all this now, and it doesn't matter if you have no intention of returning. I'll stay here . I don't want to lose anything else now, and there's nothing left for me to lose.)

There was a man, leaning on the "Gundam" hand with his arms opened wide. The black eyes looking back became a foreign object drilled into Ple Twelve's head, causing her to feel the seeds of pain within her sprouting against as she grabbed her throbbing temples with both hands.

"What is…this man saying…?"

Daddy, home, these words have nothing to do with me. This man in front of me is not my father, and I can't possibly have one. This man is Master. He hates to be called that, but he's been playing the role of master . Just like him, I didn't dare to take that step forward. I don't think that a stained person like me can replace the 'light' he lost. That's why I kept following him as a pawn to reduce the collateral damage for each other—so, what about it? What am I thinking about here?

(Don't let him get you, Ple Twelve! I'm your master, hurry up and beat down the "Unicorn Gundam"!)

The sobbing voice entered Ple Twelve's consciousness, and she turned behind. She could see Alberto lying at a corner of the tilted deck, staying right beside the twisted gondola. The round face of the man holding the communicator appeared on the enlarged window behind the burnt wires, and he was giving her a look of dependence. His eyes gave her a bigger pressure than the haunting look of the man in front of her–

(I can save you, and you can save me. Think about it. The " Gundam" is the enemy. Once you beat it, everything will be over. Let's leave this place.)

Those eyes had the same deficiencies as they were exuberating passion. "The "Gundam" is the enemy…" she muttered as she turned back to the "Unicorn Gundam" in front of her. Her master, Zinnerman was reaching his arms out to her. She was waiting for him in the "Gundam" hand—no, that could not possibly be her

master. She had already killed her master. She hated the world that robbed her of her 'light', abandoned all self that had nothing left, and snapped her master's neck.

The machine drew its right hand that was releasing the beam back and aimed it at those opened hands of the man who looked ready to be crucified. *You're just someone who's trying to confuse me with your words!* Ple Twelve intended to impale the man with the " Gundam" as she pointed the cursor at him, who showed no signs of backing off. That shadow covered the "Unicorn Gundam" that was trapped in the hangar, and a light shadow profile was spread across the wall, and the V-shaped horn silhouette was swaying like hot air.

""Gundam"…?"

She withdrew the machine and looked behind. The "Gundam" was not there. The "Banshee" was doing the same movements as the black shadow, and she turned back to look at the wall. Those hands, legs, body, that mystical silhouette was squirming just like the "Banshee" itself.

"I'm controlling, a "Gundam"…"

She let go of the control sticks and touched her face with her hands. The flames lit the "Banshee" and the shadow of the " Gundam" was reflected on the wall. *This means that I'm on a " Gundam" too? I'm inside the enemy, and the enemy's inside me? The enemy that killed my sisters, robbed me of my 'light', and continues to remain in it no matter how I tried to chase it or catch it?*

I'm my own, enemy—

A snake was wriggling inside her mind, causing the seeds of pain to erupt. Her body and mind were breaking apart, and the ideals that were once connected to her heart were severed as the flesh and blood that were connected to the machine were gradually absorbed as a weak body. *I'm my own enemy. The one I hated, wanted to kill is the me who can't protect my own 'light'.* A certain person's voice rang deep within Ple Twelve's head, and she immediately screeched. Her body was sprung up as her eyes widened; what sparkled in her eyes was the glow of the Psycoframe and the numerous warning windows, and the NT-D logo that was gradually fading became an afterimage etched in her eyes. The beam blade of the tonfa disappeared instantly, the glow of the Psycoframe darkened, and the "Banshee" collapsed on the scene like a puppet with its strings snapped.

The expanded frame started to contract, and the moveable armor completely covered the glow of the Psycoframe. The horns on its head clamped toward, and the giant's eyes were covered as it lost its "Gundam" shape, lying forward limply. The "Banshee" leaned on the "Unicorn Gundam" itself, and the machine that ceased to move opened the cockpit hatch on its chest. Ple Twelve was ejected from the linear seat, and the air maintaining the pressure within the machine flowed out instantly.

She had neither strength nor ability to protect herself as her body passed through the hatch and onto the "Unicorn Gundam" armor. Thoroughly battered, she last saw the front armor of the waist, and met the dual-eye sensor on the "Banshee" head. The black "Unicorn" seemed to be satisfied that a useless part was

ejected as its eyes darkened slightly, and it machine itself became a block of metal. The pain of the splitting headache and the battered injuries faded from her consciousness, and she closed her heavy eyelids.

"Marida!"

The gruff voice immediately rang, causing her consciousness to waver as it nearly passed out. Zinnerman, her master was calling her. Ple Twelve—Marida opened her eyes and rolled her eyeballs that were unfocused. Zinnerman in the pilot suit got through the gap of the "Unicorn Gundam" fingers and slid towards her, reaching his arm to her as his black eyes, showing only concern for her, revealed a glint underneath the helmet. This was the hand that had true warmth, the hand that saved her from the dark underground room…*daddy's hand*. Marida muttered subconsciously as her limp body started to struggle. She lifted her heavy arms, and her trembling fingers were reaching for Zinnerman, whom she had not seen for a long time.

(Stop it! Ple Twelve! Back to the cockpit!)

The cockpit hatch of the "Banshee" was still not sealed, and there was a sobbing-like screech from within. *Whose voice is it?* Marida's mind could not think well as she pulled her upper body up with much difficulty, only to feel a killing intent swarming the scene. She quickly turned back, and upon seeing the rear hatch, she spotted the round-shaped object flying into the deck, surrounded by thruster flares.

The “Anksha” resisted the external pressure of the “Garuda” as it successfully passed through the rear hatch, and immediately transformed into its mobile suit mode as it stood firm on the deck. The beam launchers on its arms were aimed at the “Unicorn Gundam” , and Marida, upon realizing that Zinnerman was still stunned and rooted to where he was, “MOVE!” turned towards the “Banshee”. The light in the eyes that were extinguished once flashed by, picked up her thought waves, and immediately raised its beam rifle. The Beam Magnum cartridge was ejected, and the “ Anksha” cannons fired their mega-particles, causing two things to happen.

The Magnum shot created a light that surrounded the “Anksha” , and as the exploded machine was knocked out of the cockpit, the crossing beam shot the “Banshee” in the flank. The light of the explosion expanded, dying everything in the line of sight white, and Marida could not think as she took this heat wave, and her body was knocked into mid-air. The scattered particles expanded like smoke, and the body that lost its sense of gravity was pierced through by an umpteenth number of shockwaves. She managed to pick up the scent of cooked meat, and that was the last thing she sensed as the pure white light became the color of flames; a heavy darkness she had never experienced before leapt upon her, causing her to lose consciousness.

Part 16

Marida's tender body was dancing in the sky, mixed in amongst the burnt shrapnel. Her long hair was scattered like the wind, and right before she landed on the deck, Zinnerman charged forward to catch her.

They fell from the front armor and tumbled onto the thigh. Banagher tried his best not to let them fall as he pushed the " Banshee" aside and raised the Beam Gatling Gun in its left hand to support it. He gathered his concentration on the killing intents gathered behind him as he looked at the rear hatch. The second " Anksha" had already landed on the overheated hatch, and the beam launchers on its forearms were aimed right at him.

"These guys…!"

The 4-barreled gun of the Beam Gatling started to spin, and the mega-particles shots landed directly on the "Anksha" body. The " Anksha" right arm was blown away with the launcher, followed by the left knee. It staggered backwards as its body was giving off black smoke from its bullet holes, and was thrown out of the hatch as it got sucked into the raging clouds outside. Banagher exhaled and opened the hatch in front of the cockpit.

Two figures were lying on the knee armor. "Captain!" Banagher leaned out from the cockpit as he called out, and the latter, who sheltered Marida with his own body, showed a response. Before he felt relieved, Banagher hurriedly got back to the linear seat, and he used the control sticks to move the right hand to where the duo

was. Zinnerman hobbled up as he carried Marida, and right before he left the limp and unmoving body lie on the palm, a new explosion rang through the deck.

Banagher waited for Zinnerman to get up, and brought his right hand up to send both of them into the cockpit. He left the cockpit for a moment to bring the wounded in, but the way Marida looked in Zinnerman's clutches caused him to gasp.

Her face was completely covered in blood and ash, and there was no sign of her usual beauty. Her pilot suit was tattered by the numerous particles, and the wound on her left flank was open, but it did not seem to be bleeding. The skin probably got burnt by the extreme heat of the particles and clogged the wound. Banagher did not have the guts to imagine the inside of the broken suit, and as he inadvertently retreated. "Don't dily-daly here!" Zinnerman growled, his voice causing Banagher's shoulders to shudder. Zinnerman's bloodshot eyes were glaring at him furiously.

"We finally managed to save her. I won't forgive you if your blunder ends up killing her."

His charred black face had the trail of water on it. Banagher felt embarrassed by his moment of hesitation as he reached his hand out to Marida without saying a word. Both of them brought her into the cockpit, and Banagher let Zinnerman, who was using himself to support her as a pillow, sit beside the linear seat. Banagher then closed the hatch, pulled the "Unicorn Gundam" up, and moved towards the rear hatch as it stepped over the collapsed "Banshee". "Please be careful not to get caught in the linear seat." Zinnerman however did not respond to Banagher's concern as he

cradled Marida like a baby, and his bearded face, removed from the helmet, continued to look forward silent.

The "Garuda" had fallen into the clouds completely. There was a complete white outside the cockpit, to a point where fingers could not be seen when they were reached out. Despite the visibility that could not be any worse, it was a blessing in the aspect that the enemy units would have difficulty tracking them. " Besson, we got Marida. We're now escaping on the "Gundam". Can you catch us?" Zinnerman called out to the communicator, and upon seeing this, Banagher let the machine approach the hatch that had collapsed somewhat. He moved the remaining Beam Gatling Gun to its right hand and tried to look for the "DO-DAI Kai". At this moment, he noticed someone stumbling near the machine's feet.

It was Alberto. He, who was dressed in the tattered suit, looked up at the "Unicorn Gundam" in a half-dazed manner. *He didn't get onto the shuttle just now?* Banagher looked stunned as he saw that charred pudgy face on the enlarged window. A moment right after he grabbed onto the sticks, he again opened the cockpit hatch.

This action caused the cockpit, which was regaining normal air pressure within, to let out air. "Oi, what's that for!?" Zinnerman growled. *How would I know?* Banagher hollered back in his heart as he let the "Unicorn Gundam" kneel down and brought the left hand of the machine to Alberto. Banagher could see the doubtful and deterred manner of Alberto's actions, "GET ON!" and yelled with all his strength.

"YOU'LL DIE IF YOU STAY HERE! HURRY UP AND GET ON!"

Alberto lifted his head in a dumbstruck manner, and after blinking a few times, looked back at Banagher. "Ignore that man!" Zinnerman growled, but Banagher turned his back on the other man as he continued to stare at Alberto. Explosions could be heard from within the deck, and the collared shirt immediately fluttered with the wind as it flipped over. The burnt fragments grazed by the outside of the cockpit, and the black smoke covered Alberto for just a short moment, only for him to suddenly give a twisted stare back.

"…What kind of joke is this."

For some reason, Banagher could hear that voice clearly, and felt a chill. Alberto pulled out the handgun in his pants as he yelled back.

"WHAT RIGHT DO YOU HAVE TO SAVE ME!?"

The bullet was fired without hesitation, and a spark flashed by the hatch of the cockpit. It was a sharp sound of metal, but the intense emotions targeted at Banagher felt like it could penetrate through his body and mind, and he leaned back onto the linear seat.

"Why are you…!"

"YOU'RE THE CULPRIT BEHIND EVERYTHING! YOU TOOK EVERYTHING FROM ME! FATHER, THE "BOX", MARIDA, EVERYTHING WAS…!"

The choking voice entered his ears, and the crisp gunshot sound echoed around the cockpit continuously. A bullet went through the hatch, grazed by the helmet and hit the headrest, and Banagher looked back at Alberto in a horrified manner. "Banagher!" Zinnerman growled as he grabbed the pilot by the arm, and Banagher's hands were forced to pick up the sticks again. The sparks of the bullets being hit rang through the flank of the cockpit as it pursued the "Unicorn Gundam" that was getting up.

"YOU MONSTER! WHO'S GOING TO BE SAVED BY YOU! SOMEONE LIKE YOU, SOMEONE LIKE YOU CAN JUST…!"

Alberto's face, which was covered with sweat and tears, vanished from the other side of the hatch. Banagher turned his back on the stare as he held his back and moved the machine. Humans could hate each other like this, even if they originated from the same life…no, it was precisely because of this reason. He had this chilling first-hand experience as he turned his stare to the clouds outside, and ceased all thoughts as he focused on flying the "Unicorn Gundam".

The machine was spat out from the rear hatch together with the rising smoke, and became a prisoner of gravity. As he watched the "Garuda" disappear from his eyes and into the clouds, Banagher started to look for the "DO-DAI Kai" on the motion sensor. The tilted "Garuda" continued to fire escape pods as numerous signals

flashed on the sensor. The front hatch let out what seemed to be a SFS, probably with escaping crewmen inside. He saw the escape pods open their parachutes as they fell into the sea, and picked up on another machine that was rising quickly in the reverse direction . He then used its thrusters and AMBAC system to adjust himself and let the fall trajectory match with the machine. A few seconds later, the flat "DO-DAI Kai" frame appeared from between the clouds as it caught the "Unicorn Gundam" which lit its thrusters for an instant.

Banagher lowered the "Unicorn Gundam" as it landed on the platform, and let the manipulators grab onto the grips. Beams went right above the machine as the "DO-DAI Kai" turned to move upwards, and he was shocked by this unanticipated attack. He hurriedly tried to transfer the control of the "DO-DAI Kai" over, "Leave the enemy alone. Go right at the "Garencieres"!" But Zinnerman roared back. Banagher shook off the thought of Alberto in his mind, caught sight of an "Anksha" squadron closing in quickly from the rear camera, and fired the Beam Gatling to hold them off.

The disc-shaped machines immediately scattered and disappeared in the clouds. The "DO-DAI Kai" used this chance to rise up, broke through the mist, and arrived above the clouds. At the same moment, the sea of clouds below the eyes let out ripples, and a large shadow rose up from below it as the triangular ship appeared in his eyes. The "Garencieres" forced the clouds back like a submarine as it glided through the currents, showing its body. "Very good. Perfect timing." Upon hearing Zinnerman

mutter, Banagher looked down at the “Garencieres” that was moving together, and once their relative velocities matched, he stepped on the pedal.

The “Unicorn Gundam” jumped off the platform of the “ DO-DAI Kai”, and after it was blown away for several meters, it leaned down on the deck of the “Garencieres”. He mounted the Beam Gatling gun back upon the arm, and grabbed onto the grip on the deck with one hand as he reached the other hand for the “ DO-DAI Kai” above. There was no way they could get Besson on board without dragging the “DO-DAI Kai” towards the ship and tied its lift wire onto the “Garencieres”. *The speed was 0.6 Mach, and the “Unicorn Gundam” can barely use pull the DO-DAI Kai with its hands, but will the pursuers catch up?* Right when Banagher thought about this, mega-particle beams flashed by the blue skies, and the “DO-DAI Kai” was knocked off course by the shockwaves as it deviated off course.

The beam launchers on the side of the round discs fired as two “ Ankshas” rose from below the clouds. “Hang on! Steady the machine!” Banagher exclaimed as he reached out towards the “ DO-DAI Kai”. However, there was a holler from the wireless communicator full of noise, “Leave me!” and his hand on the sticks immediately tensed up.

(Protect the Captain and Marida! I’ll—)

There was a shrill noise, and a flash appeared above the head. The fireball was instantly blown to the back, and an explosion, followed by the fragments of the shattered “DO-DAI Kai” appeared on the rear camera visual. “Mr Besson…!”Banagher

called out, but there was no reply, and the fireball instantly faded away. The two "Ankshas" passed through the black smoke and pursued on as they continued to fire beams.

Banagher gritted his teeth as he fired the remaining shots of the Beam Gatling at the enemy units, intending to shake them off. He was about to let the machine stand up, "Flaste, maximum battle speed.", but Zinnerman muttered, cooling Banagher's head down.

"There's no time to let the "Gundam" enter the ship. Full speed ahead. Let's shake off the pursuers and head towards space."

Zinnerman exerted more strength into his arms that were cradling Marida, and restrained the anger on his face as he looked forward. He got something back, and lost something, and at this point, his heart was feeling the weight of these two sensations. Banagher secretly glanced behind to look at him, and then looked at Marida, who was resting peacefully in Zinnerman's arms. At this moment, a large light exploded from behind, causing Banagher to look up in surprise.

There was a certain light that brightened the clouds below, and after a lightning-like flash, a deep boom echoed through the blue sky. The "Garuda" was most likely destroyed. Banagher let the machine like on the "Garencieres" deck, and even as he could not witness the explosion below the clouds, he continued to look at the light on the rear camera. The flickering black and red glow appeared in one corner of the clouds, and showed the end of this large machine. The "Garencieres" started to accelerate, and that light immediately faded from below his eyes as it entered the blind spot of the ship, and disappeared.

Big brother. Banagher thought of this term that felt surreal as he closed the window. He recalled the face of his blood relative that would leave a scar in his heart forever, and took the incoming G-force with his body while looking at the blue sky expanded in front of him. The "Garencieres" seemed to be basking under the bright sunlight without doing anything as its three engines were at full throttle, rising through the skies. The blue seas that were clearer than the skies appeared, silently sending off a ship that was leaving Earth.

Part 17

There was a little opening in the thick clouds, and the sunlight shone upon the landscape like a sword. It shone upon Torrington Base, full of rubble and black smoke, and also lit the front deck of the "Ra Cailum" which had its main cannons wrecked. The porthole of the ordinary bridge was covered by the warm sunlight.

"We got confirmation that the "Garuda" was destroyed."

Meran spoke as he took up the telegram the communications operator handed over. The battle had ended just an hour ago, and he, who had been raising an eyebrow over how slow their comrades in Torrington were doing, finally started to regain his usual composure. "It's said that the Captain and everyone else under him managed to escape safely." Upon hearing this report from behind, Bright turned towards the porthole in front. He looked on at the second main cannon that was still hot after the direct hit bitterly, "What about the "Garencieres"?" and asked without looking back.

"It's said that they've escaped. From their acceleration, it seems that they intend to fly to space. The "Unicorn" is with it too."

Meran ended his report with a meaningful tone, and stood beside Bright. Despite the unexpected loss of the "Garuda", the situation was still developing in the way Bright hoped for. "Is that so." He simply answered as he moved his hand to the bottom of the porthole and inspected the situation of the base located on the ship's starboard. Ignoring the gentle sunlight shining through the clouds, the only term that could describe the devastation in Torrington Base was messy.

The command tower situated in the center of the base was still smoking, and there were fire trucks and ladder trucks surrounding it. The barracks was basically rubble in the form of a hill, and the relief-aid work was still proceeding as four-wheeled drives of the ambulance squad were rushing through the base. The reason why the vehicles could be seen snaking around was most likely because the drivers had to avoid the holes and cracks on the road. The little MLRS scattershots rained down from above bombarded the surface that could barely be called a road, leaving behind wounds that the base could not remove in short order. The only ones that could move freely were the mobile suits, and the "Jestas" of the " Ra Cailum" were sent out to aid, as he could spot them removing the rubble from the porthole. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they were the only ones moving the burnt debris of the Zeon machines, and two "Jestas" were removing the wreckage of a Dom-type mobile suit on the runway, where there was an explosion that left a radial burn mark.

It was said that the situation was the same on the coast, as the base Defense squadron took tremendous damage while the Zeon forces were completely annihilated. The Zeon remnants could have abandoned the base, but they came to attack with a suicidal intent. Even if there were machines that could survive miraculously, how would those people fare in the future—Bright suddenly thought about it, and sighed hard. He looked up at the " Jestas" with the Tri-Stars logo sprayed on their shoulders, thought of Lieutenant Nigel's expression, "Inform the mobile suit squad about this too." And spoke to Meran.

"Once they hear this, those proposing to chase after them will probably give up."

The Tri-Stars were the ones who proposed to ride on the Base Jabbers and argued for it for some time. Perhaps the way they were shaken off by the "Unicorn" so easily made them really unhappy, as even the usually unflappable Nigel would not back off. *Ensign Riddhe sure is troublesome for leaving alone like that, how young he is…* Bright concluded while harboring the thoughts of an old man, "Yes" felt that this reply from his First Officer was not really convincing, and glanced over. Meran paid attention to the stares of the other crewmen in the bridge, and asked,

"Are you certain they can handle this…?"

Meran approached the porthole and narrowed his eyes as he looked up at the sky. "we can only do this now." Bright followed his stare as he answered.

"Let us believe in them. We can only rely on their luck now."

Meran continued to look up quietly. There were *those people* who were rising up to space, and *those people* who were waiting to receive them in orbit. Bright imagined their meeting in between sky and space as he continued to look up at the clouds letting through light. He had already done what he could do, and the rest would have to depend on their luck. The ships and the fleet were attracted by the "Gundam", and formed a relationship because of it—but one could only hope that they could get along. The only way they could break through the situations where they could not deviate from would be to rely on the power of possibilities humanity had. That boy called Banagher was born with the power called harmony.

It's all up to you now. Bright looked up at the clouds that never stopped with the flow as he tightened the grip on the windowsill. The sunlight, which appeared for a while, was immediately covered, and the thick clouds shadowed the "Ra Cailum" on the ground from above.

Part 18

The landing deck at the aft was bent straight and the rear cannon seemed to be packed in under the battleship to hide it. The main thrusters in the middle of the aft were deployed to the back, and once the ballute appeared around the nozzles, the "Nahel Argama" got ready to enter the atmosphere.

"Ballute's ready."

"60 seconds till thrust reverse. Everyone, prepare for it."

Mihiro's tense voice rang after the navigation officer's as it echoed through the bridge. Otto put on his normal suit helmet as his hands grabbed onto the Captain's seat armrests. He went through a similar experience on another ship, but this was the first time he was using the Ballute on the "Nahel Argama". He looked around at the backs of the crewmen, wearing their heavy normal suits, licked his dry lips, "What's the movement of our target?" and asked the sensor operator.

"Current altitude is 98km. Course is steady, but it's not at the speed to leave the atmosphere yet. Estimated point of contact is adjusted at Minus 8."

"Just like what Commanding Officer Bright, huh…right, continue to send a signal. Our ship[shall remain right above the thermosphere, and we'll use the tether cables to pull up this target. All hands, take note of the ship's height and velocity. If we go in too deep, we'll be caught by gravity and unable to escape the atmosphere."

If they become the prisoner of gravity itself, the thruster power of the "Nahel Argama" itself would not be sufficient for them to return to space. Otto did not really hear the tense voices of the crewmen repeating as he looked at the silhouette of Earth that was almost at eye level through the window. It had been less than 2 hours since Commanding Officer Bright suddenly notified them. The entire crew hurried to get ready, and though they managed to catch sight of the target on the sensor, it really felt surreal to him. The target ship got clearer, and he wondered if he got duped by his superior. If the data on the optical sensor was correct, it would be—

"It's the "Garencieres"—the disguised trading ship affiliated to the"Sleeves"."

It seemed that Liam too had the same suspicions as she ostensibly talked to herself. Upon hearing this, Otto looked at the tall First Officer standing beside him.

"No doubts about it. It's the ship that once followed us from " Industrial 7". Is this fine?"

"There's nothing good or bad about it. CO Bright gave us this direct order, so we can only follow it."

"Is that so…"

"Besides, no matter what kind of mission the higher-ups give us is, it's good to have something to do."

This is certainly better than revolving around Earth like a ghost. Liam looked back at Otto, who forced this smile, and slowly relaxed her lips as she leapt from the floor. As a comrade who spent the past 2 weeks or so with nothing to do, the First Officer could understand how hard it would be to kill time without a motive. No matter what happened next, it would be better than to feel the emptiness of being unable to do anything. Otto grumbled in his heart desperately, but he found himself much more relaxed than before, and turned his wryly smiling face to the front. Once Liam sat down, "10 seconds to Reverse Thrust." The navigation officer

reported as his vice rang through the corridor. The “Nahel Argama ” began its countdown as it hovered in low orbit around the still Earth silently.

Once the countdown reached zero, the reverse thruster flares were lit in unison, and the G-force from behind fell upon the inside of the ship that suddenly stopped. As the ship slowed down gradually, it started to break off from its orbital velocity, and started to fall. The verniers let out flares to stabilize the “Nahel Argama”, which lifted the only catapult deck it had left as it got ready to head down to Earth from its aft.

The air surrounding the ship got gradually thicker, and as the ship accelerated, it let out a rattling sound as it shook. After falling to below 150km in altitude, the white armor turned red hot, prompting the ballute system, chained with the altitude meter, into action. The armor around the thruster nozzles sprung out, and a large balloon expanded from it, covering the aft of the “Nahel Argama” in an airtight manner. The bowl-shaped air cushion formed a ballute that was 200m in diameter, which worked to negate the resistance from the atmosphere.

The large pressure below the bowl continued to let out high-pressured air, blocking out the frictional heat from the aft. The “Nahel Argama” used its ballute, opened on the back, to dive into the atmosphere. The air in the thermosphere got thicker, and the shock cones surrounding the ship dragged a long tail above the atmosphere.

Part 19

(You're saying the "Nahel Argama" sent us a report?)

A gruff voice reached Mineva's ears as soon as she stepped into the bridge. She swallowed her urge to ask what was going on as she stood still, but Flaste, who ignored her arrival, "It's opening its ballute and descending. If this keeps up, we'll meet the "Nahel Argama" head on!" growled back as he sat on the navigation seat.

"They say they're going to use the tether to put this ship. The Federation sure know about our situation here. Do we return to Earth now?"

(No, if we go back now, we'll just be hunted by the pursuers. Since there's no place for resupply, space in front of us here will be the last chance.)

The rumbling sound of the atmosphere boomed as it hurled upon the ship, and Zinnerman's reply was mixed in with this sound through the contact loop. The other crewmen hoped that Mineva would stay at somewhere safe, but she felt that there was no difference in wherever she was in this situation. She stood beside the Captain's seat and looked up at the red hot light on the bridge window. They were about to go beyond 100km in height, and though the air had become a lot thinner, the "Garencieres" that was flying several times that of supersonic had to bear a burden that was beyond normal. It was not as difficult as landing towards Earth by making use of the atmosphere resistance, but ships moving through the thermosphere had to endure the frictional heat, and the external temperature was already more than 1000 degrees Celsius. One might not see it from this point, but the "Unicorn Gundam" lying on the deck was also surrounded by

extreme heat as well, and the white machine was certainly becoming red hot.

Banagher aside, Zinnerman and Marida, who was said to be rescued, could not leave that cockpit. *Can the machine hang on in such heat and resistance?* Mineva knew that it was pointless, but she looked up at the ceiling, and at that moment, the turbines let out a dull sound, and the ship rattled. Alec paid attention to her, who supported herself off the wall after this jolt, "Please sit down!" as he called out with a softened voice from the steering seat. there were not too many options on the cramped bridge, so Mineva sat on the empty Captain's seat. "Now what do we do?" she heard Flaste ask anxiously.

"The ship's full of symptoms now, and the "Gundam" on the deck will cause more resistance. If this keeps up, we won't be able to return to space!"

(But we can't let the Federation ships catch us—)

(That ship's here to get us.)

A sudden voice interrupted Zinnerman, and Flaste brought his chin back in surprise. Mineva's body experienced a flash as she understood that it was Banagher's voice, and brought her eyes to the wireless communicator headset. (What are you saying?) Zinnerman asked, but Banagher answered, (If it's the "Nahel Argama", it's here for us…!) his voice ringing in Mineva's eardrums clearer than before.

(They're not enemies, Mr Flaste. Please follow their instructions.)

(What kind of joke is this!? Flaste, lower the height and change our course. Let the "Gundam" enter the hatch. We'll be able to escape the atmosphere with this ship alone.)

Upon hearing the two voices argue with each other through the communicator, Flaste looked troubled as he exchanged looks with Alec. "But if we lower our altitude now, we'll enter the enemy's Defense zone…" Flaste said as he started to calculate the orbit, but Mineva ignored him as she stared at the beacon blinking on the sensor. That Federation ship had predicted the movements of the " Garencieres", and indicated that it would pull the ship into space by tether. Logically, they should suspect that the ship had an intention to take down the "Garencieres", but it was too early of them to give the notification. If the ship really intended to defeat them all in one swoop, they would choose to appear at the most opportune moment, and would not have to indicate its ship classification and course. The signal on the sensor was certainly the "Nahel Argama", and they already sent over the expected rendezvous on their own.

It was just like what Banagher said, there was no antagonistic feeling here. Flaste and the rest felt the same, and that was why they could not respond to Zinnerman's instructions immediately. She looked back at the ceiling of the bridge, and had a hallucination of the "nahel Argama" approaching them for behind. The Federation battleship was related to her out of fate ever since the "Industrial 7" incident, and would actually appear in this

instance. It did not have any intent to antagonize, and declared its intention to pull the "Garencieres" into space; everything just felt like it was planned beforehand—

"Flaste, maintain our course. I want to make contact with the Federation ship."

Mineva gave this order decisively as she looked forward. Flaste and Alec turned their heads around at the same time, (Princess…!?) and Zinnerman's doubtful voice rang through the communicator.

(Banagher has a point. That ship's now beyond the control of both the Federation and Zeon. I don't think they appeared here just to catch us."

As she spoke, she asked herself, *Is that so?* However, she felt that there was no mistake. She was not as certain as Banagher, but she could sense that the situation was changing. The "Nahel Argama" was a hot potato no one dared to touch after the Vist Foundation made it its pawn, and would certainly be left in Earth's orbit by the Federation. The "Ra Cailum" had taken damage, but it certainly was not their style not to pursue on, and a certain person' s intention was vaguely hidden in it—Flaste was wondering if she was okay, and she looked back at him, giving this non-verbal meaning *You should be able to understand*. Once that was said and looked forward as she held onto the Captain armrest. (Nope, don't listen to the Princess' words, Flaste.) Zinnerman's stubborn voice rang through the communicator.)

"Zinnerman…!"

(Princess, a lot of sacrifices from the ship has been made up till now. We really shouldn't surrender ourselves and put the deaths of the soldiers in vain.)

"You're just saying that because of your grudge. If you really want to avenge their sacrifices, you have to follow your heart bravely."

The words from the Queen herself caused Flaste and Alec to tense their shoulders. Mineva sensed Zinnerman's speechless breath through the communicator, "You should be able to understand." And emphasized calmly.

"If it's really an enemy, it'll choose a smarter move. The deaths of the many soldiers brought that Federation ship over. Nobody has the right to mess up this chance for the sake of the situation or pride. Marida's saved already, and you want to put her at risk?"

There was no response from the communicator. The marker of the "Nahel Argama" was certainly approaching, and as time continued to pressure them, she waited for Zinnerman's reply silently. Banagher too had the same feeling. There was no certain proof, but there was an instinct kicking in, telling them there was no mistake, and she held her breath and waited for Zinnerman's decision. In this uncertain situation itself, this instinct alone was the only thing supporting Marida from behind.

Part 20

The thin air in the thermosphere blew upon the ship, causing the "Unicorn Gundam" lying on the deck to be red hot, and the

all-view monitor was dyed a pink light. Bangher held onto the sticks that were vibrating without stopping as he looked at Zinnerman's face. The bearded face was cradling Marida as he looked at a certain spot silently, but just would not let his silent stare look back. Banagher looked at those black eyes devoid of emotion, and could not tell if he was hesitating.

Maybe this won't do. The weakened soul whispered to Banagher. There was too much baggage for Zinnerman to act on instinct. This was the gravity called responsibility—but Zinnerman still came to save him. Even if it was the inadvertent result of wanting to get this "Unicorn", his actions brought about the chance to save Audrey and Marida at the same time.

Sometimes, if we act not on logic, but by what our hearts say, we'll get unexpected results. Banagher told himself. He could only trust in the other man as he looked at the red vision on the monitor. Audrey had the same feeling too. Even if the world denied it, he still had a strength supporting him, allowing him to fight on based on his beliefs.

The "Garencieres" moved down the Equator to the East, and was intending to use the Earth's rotation to enter space; the "Nahel Argama" was moving in the same direction as it approached from behind. There was only one chance for both sides to meet. If the " Nahel Argama" orbit the Earth once more, the "Garencieres" would fall due to a lack of fuel. Banagher adjusted the angle of the rear camera, tried to catch sight of that red light on the enlarged window, and felt sweat on his forward. *Hurry up!* He resisted the urge to prompt, and as he gritted his teeth, "Flaste." Zinnerman spoke with a heavy tone.

"Continue forward. Get ready to meet with the Federation ship. Follow their instructions and raise the Grapple Beam."

Zinnerman glared at Banagher, who looked back inadvertently, and looked away awkwardly, "It's better than remaining on Earth and getting ourselves picked off. Stay on guard!" Upon hearing Zinnerman add on, (Roger that!) Flaste answered with a somewhat cheery tone. *As expected, everyone has the same feeling.* Banagher secretly felt delighted. He recognized that the situation was guiding them to the necessary path, and the power of the common view was with everyone. The term Newtype appeared in his mind for an instant, and he grabbed onto the control sticks tightly as he caught sight of the current location of the approaching "Nahel Argama" on the monitor. The displacement between them was less than 100km. the enlarged window with a lot of noise on it showed the light, and the plasma light from the ballute was the only thing that could be seen as the target looked just like a burnt meteor.

The ballute looked like an umbrella on fire as it opened up from the aft, and the "Nahel Argama" was closing in at a speed of Mach 20. "That's…" Zinnerman muttered as the ship brought the long tether cable above the "Garencieres" and gave a light signal from the belly. The "Garencieres" shot out its Grapple Arm, and a long crane-like pillar rose from behind the "Unicorn Gundam" that was prowled. The mast hook at the center of the ship looked like a fishing rod, and the pillar that was approximately 20m long started to reach towards the "Nahel Argama".

The "Nahel Argama" would immediately shoot its tether to hook onto the mast hook, and the "Garencieres" dangling by the

wire would be able to use the other ship's momentum to gain acceleration, escape the atmosphere, and enter space; this was the theory behind a tether thrust. The "Nahel Argama" gradually passed by above the "Garencieres", and their displacement was more than 10km. This would be the maximum limit for a standard tether cable, but would they be able to get close? As the signal continued to flash, Banagher and Zinnerman held their breaths as they waited for the wire. However, an impact jolted the cockpit from below, causing their hearts to panic. The "Garencieres" gave a dull sound again, and the ship descended by 10km or so.

The "Garencieres" tried to maintain its altitude, but it could not remain steady as it inched away from the "Nahel Argama" above it, trembling. "What's going on!?" Zinnerman shouted, but Flaste yelled back, (The turbine output is dropping! We're at our limit!) Upon hearing their conversation, Banagher looked up at the " Nahel Argama" covered by the shock cones. *We can't make it, the tether's about to fire.* "Not good…!" Once he inadvertently said this, a white light brighter than the signal flashed by his head, and the tether cable that was fired through left a black line in the middle of the scorching colors.

The thrusters located at the front hook let out a flare, and the tether cable broke through the wall of shock cones as it flew right at the "Garencieres". The latter ship forced itself to move towards what seemed to be the end of a spider strand dangling right in front of it, and was ostensibly forcing its last ounce of energy on running the turbines. The long Hyper Carbon Nanotube was reaching forward at full speed, and upon seeing it reach above the "Unicorn Gundam", he immediately lifted the sticks and stepped on the pedal.

The “Unicorn Gundam” got up from the deck, raised its right hand to grab the tip of the tether, and used its left hand to grab onto the Grapple Beam firmly. It raised its thrusters to grab the tether cable that was out of fuel, and intended to pull it down to the arm of the Grapple Beam, but a rapidly falling feeling struck Banagher. The “Unicorn Gundam” feet left the deck of the “ Garencieres” which dropped in altitude again, causing it to float into space as it grabbed onto the tether and arm as it experienced a tugging feeling, and it ended up pulled by both sides as it was basked in the scorching currents.

The frame was pulled to the limit as it let out a rattling sound trying to pull up the falling "Garencieres". The overload sign appeared on the display board, and the alarm indicating insufficient power rang by his ears. *If I let go here—this one line linking them will remain severed forever!* "Don't force yourself! The machine will split if you keep this up!" Zinnerman exclaimed, but Banagher ignored him as he used all his strength to pull the sticks up, and opened the throttles of the machine to its maximum.

"This "Unicorn Gundam" isn't for show…!"

The "Unicorn Gundam" took the mass of the "Garencieres" on one side and the thrust of the "Nahel Argama" on the other as it let out a metallic roar. The Psycoframe was glowing brighter, and Banagher could sense the luminous light shining through the cockpit. He gritted his teeth at the same time as he gathered his entire will into the machine.

(Banagher…!) Audrey's call faded. The machine let out a cry as it reached its limit, and Banagher felt the pain of his body being ripped into pieces. This was because the Psycommu System was starting to reverse, causing the machine to feel a burden, turning it into a sensation of pain that was transferred to the brain. There was no reason for a mobile sui alone to support the mass of two ships. *Let go, let go!* the system was warning him as it echoed through his head, and he let out a groan from his gritting teeth. *That's too reckless already, isn't it?* the timidity within him started to whisper, and right when his numb hand was about to let go of the sticks, a hand reached over from the side and grabbed it.

The fuzzy warmth of the body came from this other hand, and the tortured senses eased silently. Banagher widened his eyes, looked over at the owner of the hand, and found Marida, who was lying in Zinnerman's hand, opening her eyes slightly as she looked back at him. *You should be saying 'even so' now, right?* Her smiling expression let out these words, and that hand that was holding Banagher's seemed like it was going to spread all the warmth in its body. The raging heat flowing within the body went from the hand to the entire body, and Banagher again gathered strength on his hands grabbing the sticks. The luminous light on the Psycoframe got brighter and brighter, and at that moment, the light expanded as it seemingly saturated.

The red luminous light that came from the machine was swallowed by a new gentle light that rose out, and both lights gradually became one. That light, which may look green, yellow, blue or even red at times, filled the Psycoframe of the "Unicorn Gundam", and the rainbow-like refracted light spread across to the surrounding mobile suits. Banagher saw a small needle-like glow scatter around, and saw the "Garencieres" and the "Nahel Argama " basked in that light. "What is this light…?" Upon hearing Zinnerman murmur, Banagher started to hallucinate as he saw his body become light that spread across space.

This light was different from the savage light that appeared when he was battling the "Banshee", and as it surrounded the " Unicorn Gundam" like an aurora, the machine that was stretched to its limit started to move. Because of the arms pulling the tether and the Grapple Beam, the massive hull of the "Garencieres" was

gradually pulled up. As both ships closed in distance, Banagher's thoughts flew through the light and into space, and sensed the thoughts of the humans on both ships.

Audrey was calling from the Captain's seat, Flaste and Alec were steering the "Garencieres", Captain Otto was giving the instructions, Ensign Mihiro was giving notices through the ship, First Officer Liam was running to the engine room, Haro was floating through the corridors of the ship, Takuya in the mechanic uniform was running along the mobile suit deck, and Micott in the refugee block seemed to realize something as she looked up—

However, Marida, who was tightly embraced by Zinnerman in his arms, let out a smile beside the shell Banagher left on the cockpit. Banagher looked down at the two hands pulling the sticks, and felt the warmth of the flesh from them…once his spiritual consciousness realized this, the hook mast was latched on, and the feeling of the tightened rope pulled Banagher back into his flesh.

The "Nahel Argama" lit its Reverse Thrust as it accelerated. The "Garencieres" hull was dragged, and accelerated as it was pulled up. The roaring winds passed by to the back, and the scorching colors of the sky dulled as the unblinking starry space covered the two ships from above while the deafening silence enveloped them. The resistance of the atmosphere covering the ships disappeared, and the power of inertia pushed both ships forward. The " Garencieres" and the "Nahel Argama" left the atmosphere at the same time, becoming two satellites orbiting around Earth. On their paths, one could see the Earth in its night state, space with no signs of the moon, and the countless stars.

The “Unicorn Gundam” pulled the tether cable linking the ships as it too returned to space safely. As the rainbow weakened, the Psycoframe was reverting back to its original red color, and the colors scattered around let out an afterglow of a trail. This afterglow became a belt of light linking the Federation ship and the Neo Zeon ship, also leaving behind a bright aurora that would not disappear from a corner of Earth for a while.

Part 21

The flashing colorful light danced in the darkness. It looked like the scales of a butterfly as it spread across the sealed eyelids in a fantastical manner, before disappearing without warning.

Alberto opened his eyes. The light in reality was too sharp, and he closed his eyes before opening them slowly again. What he saw first was the sea surface from the sky. The waves of the glittering seas were reflecting the sunlight, and a strong light that was beyond the level of a fantasy radiated in front of his eyes, stimulating them.

He looked over at the sea surface in a half-awake manner, and once the vibration of the communicator vibrating under his buttocks pulled his senses back to reality, he turned to moe his head leaning on the wall. He was aching all over, probably due to being in the cramped places for such a long time. *Is this some mobile suit cockpit?* he touched the curved monitor panel at his feet and intended to look up at the linear seat beside him, but at this moment, a shadow appeared in a corner of the all-view monitor, and his heart jolted, beating his chest.

There was a mobile suit riding on the "Anksha" in its mobile suit form, gliding diagonally below Alberto's sights. He realized that it was the "Banshee", and turned his awakened face to the panel at his feet. The machine's limbs were not damaged. *The flank should have taken a direct hit. How's the situation?* Alberto looked down at the machine lit by the reflected light off the sea, and thought of the name Marida, "We can't seem to find the pilot." before a voice rang beside him.

He lifted his face and looked over at the linear seat to find Riddhe Marceans there. Riddhe looked at him for a moment, before turning his somewhat forsaken expression forward as he activated the display board. He opened the expanded window to show the "Banshee" closeup as it laid down on the disc, but Alberto's face remained unmoved. *How did things end up like this? Why is this guy—no, where is this place?* Alberto could not clear the doubts rising up his heart at the same time as he focused on looking at Riddhe's face. In the end, Riddhe turned around in an annoyed manner, removed his helmet, reached for his blond hair, "Since you're awake, pull out the assistance chair yourself." And spoke coldly.

"I'm already out of breath trying to pull your unconscious self on board. You're an Anaheim employee, so you should know the construct of a mobile suit, right?"

In the face of this glance, Alberto looked around the inner wall of the cockpit again. Since he could see the sea surface, it meant that this mobile suit was not on a Base Jabber, which meant that it could fly in atmosphere on its own. *This means that I'm on Riddhe's machine, the transformable "Delta Plus" in its wave rider form?* Upon

realizing this, Alberto calmed down slightly as he exhaled. He searched his tattered clothes, realized that he had no realy injuries, and turned towards Riddhe again. “Why did you save me?” he asked, but Riddhe was unwilling to look at him in the eyes, “That’s how things are going now.” He answered with a sigh.

“I too passed out after I was shot down by the “Banshee”. By the time I woke up and got back to the sinking “Garuda”, you and the empty “Banshee” were the only ones lift.”

Riddhe looked over at the “Banshee”, lifeless like a puppet as it laid on the “Anksha”, and narrowed his eyes. “The “Unicorn” has vanished.” *And Mineva too…* some heartfelt words could be heard right after this mutter, and Alberto did not intend to ask further as he looked further. *His love affair may have ended*, this understanding landed upon the cavity in Alberto’s chest and created ripples in his hollow body.

Both of them were descendants of those cursed by the “Laplace Box”, and both lost their fleeting love—the “Delta Plus” ferried the birds of a feather filled with suspicion and disappointment as it flew through the evening sky. Alberto had no idea of where they were going or where they should go as he looked at the sky and sea that was dyed amber. The “Anksha”, ferrying the unmanned “ Banshee”, turned with the sea surface behind it as it pivoted its way through the crimson sky, letting out an empty trail of jet cloud .